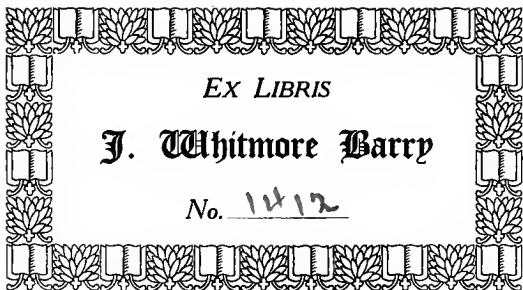


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DOMINANT SEX
BY
ANNIE NATHAN MEYER

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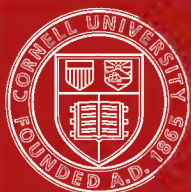
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THE DOMINANT SEX

Press of The Lancaster Printing Co., Lancaster, Pa.

THE DOMINANT SEX

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY
ANNIE NATHAN MEYER



NEW YORK
BRANDU'S

1911

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THE DOMINANT SEX

ACT I. THE MASONS' HOUSE.
 A Bed Room.

ACT II JOHN MASON'S OFFICE.
 An Hour Later.

ACT III. THE MASONS' HOUSE.
 The Library.
 A Fortnight Later.

The Action Takes Place Today In New York.

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THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

In the order of their appearance

MRS. JOHN MASON, Prominent society woman, distinguished for her philanthropy and public spirit, running for the Presidency of the Federation of Clubs.

MRS. DEMING, Secretary to Mrs. Mason.

JOHN MASON, Important Financier.

MRS. OLIVER T. H. NORTON, Beautiful, frivolous society woman.

A MAID.

MADEMOISELLE.

MRS. SAMPSON-BLACK, Professional platform speaker.

OFFICE BOY.

ROSE MALONE, Telephone Girl.

JAMES EWING, Secretary to John Mason.

MRS. ALEXANDER MORTIMER.

PERKINS.

MARY.

MISS LILLIAN RAY, Reporter from the Evening Whirl.

ACT I

Curtain rises on a luxuriously appointed bed room—two single beds—one bed unoccupied—in the other MRS. JOHN MASON propped up with pillows eating her breakfast from an elaborately set tray. As she eats, she glances at a newspaper. Several other papers lying around. A knock at door.

Mrs. Mason. Come.

(Enter her secretary, MRS. DEMING, holding a pile of letters, also some open sheets of writing.)

(Seeing Mrs. Deming enter, Mrs. Mason turns to her rather petulantly.)

You're late this morning.

Mrs. Deming. Oh, I think you are mistaken—you forget you ordered breakfast earlier than usual.

Mrs. Mason. That's so! What time is it?

Mrs. Deming. Quarter before nine.

Mrs. Mason. I suppose Mr. Mason is through his breakfast?

Mrs. Deming. Oh, yes, and Elizabeth is waiting for her father to take her to school.

Mrs. Mason. (Lackadaisically.) How people can get up for breakfast!

Mrs. Deming. (Briskly.) Oh, it gets the whole day going right to be up and dressed early.

Mrs. Mason. Do you think so? On the contrary, I think it's so restful to take breakfast in bed. You feel so content while everyone else is hurry-skurry-ing. I can plan a meeting or think out a speech so much better in bed. I'm sure I'd have some horrid kind of indigestion if I attempted to eat my breakfast when I'm dressed.

Mrs. Deming. Well, you certainly make up for it, the way you fly around the rest of the day. I see you have the papers.

Mrs. Mason. (Smiling and holding up one.) Did you ever?

(Mrs. Deming smiles and nods.)

(Holding up another.)

And this! Isn't it a fright!

Mrs. Deming. The penalty of greatness.

Mrs. Mason. But there's no use refusing.

Mrs. Deming. Dear me, no! They'd take any leftover and label it "Mrs. John Mason, President of the Magdalen Home, Treasurer of the Equality League—chief speaker at the dinner of the Municipal

Housekeepers, and now the leading candidate for the Presidency of the Federation of Women's Clubs."

Mrs. Mason. Well, I have to forgive them, for they give me enough space—look! Two whole columns, and they squeezed Mrs. Parker-Gordon into a bare paragraph.

Mrs. Deming. They won't think of her for President of the Federation after this triumph of yours.

Mrs. Mason. (Holding out her hands for letters.) Are they all ready for my signature?

Mrs. Deming. (Embarrassed.) Not quite all.

Mrs. Mason. (Querulously.) I expected them all to be ready.

Mrs. Deming. (Quickly.) I'll work over time to-night and get through. I—sat with Bobby yesterday and told him stories.

Mrs. Mason. You are incorrigible. Bobby has his nurse.

Mrs. Deming. Says he's tired of Jane—knows all her stories backward, and you don't know what it means to me, to have a golden haired little fellow on my knee. (Voice breaks.)

Mrs. Mason. (Hastily.) Yes, yes, I know. And these? (As she takes other letters.)

Mrs. Deming. (Smiling.) All ringing various changes on the same theme.

(Mrs. Mason look up with raised eyebrows.)

Your speech, of course.

Mrs. Mason. Oh!

(Looks over several letters hurriedly, passes them to Mrs. Deming with remarks.)

Decline this—

(Another.)

Just say in the third person I've done all I can.

(Another.)

Send twenty-five dollars.

(Another.)

Take a box—

(Another. Looks up from reading.)

What have I on hand the nineteenth?

Mrs. Deming. (Consulting engagement pad on stand next to bed.)

You address the F. P. W. at Newark.

Mrs. Mason. (Consults letter.) The twenty-fourth?

Mrs. Deming. Boston—Equality League.

Mrs. Mason. Twenty-third?

Mrs. Deming. Albany, hearing.

Mrs. Mason. Just say we'll have to make it next month.

Mrs. Deming. Very well—Miss Maunders 'phoned to know if you'd take tea with her at the Club—she's in the city for two days.

Mrs. Mason. Rose here? Read me my list for today.

Mrs. Deming. Eleven, fitting at Reynier's.

Mrs. Mason. Yes?

Mrs. Deming. Eleven forty-five—at Mrs. Van Ness—The Spiritual Uplift of the Bhagavad Gita by Mona Singh. One thirty, Annual luncheon—Woman's Republican Club—reply to toast "The Needed Touch of Women." Three thirty—At the Club—Readings from Maeterlinck by Madame de Paumier. Five to Seven—At Homes—

Mrs. Mason. Never mind! Just send cards—

Mrs. Deming. Guests for dinner. Opera "Thais."

Mrs. Mason. Um—'phone I can take tea with her nicely at the Club after the Maeterlinck Reading—or tell her I'll get a ticket for her—I won't have much time for tea, and we can chat some if we sit next to each other.

(Enter JOHN MASON.)

Mason. Good morning.

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Mrs. Mason. (Petulantly.) You'll have to come back, Mrs. Deming.

Mason. (Amused at her tone.) I won't be long.

(Exit Mrs. Deming.)

(Mason goes to take one chair after another, finds them occupied with Mrs. Mason's clothes, etc.)

(To Mrs. Mason.)

I'm worried over Bobby—didn't eat his breakfast right.

Mrs. Mason. (Glancing over a letter.) H'm!

Mason. Looks a little peaked—as if he doesn't get enough air.

Mrs. Mason. Why, he takes a drive every morning in the brougham.

Mason. Why don't you turn him loose in the Park?

Mrs. Mason. Such a rough gang, John—really. And he comes back so dirty!

Mason. Couldn't you open Salt Meadows for Easter, and take the children down!

Mrs. Mason. Good Heavens, John! Why I'm up to my ears—(Catches his gloomy look.) But there's no reason why the children shouldn't go. I'll send

down a couple of maids, and the care-taker's wife cooks nicely.

Mr. Mason. Don't you think you could manage to go with them?

Mrs. Mason. (Carelessly.) Oh, they won't miss me—Jane will be with them, and Mademoiselle. What more do they want?

Mason. Maybe a mother.

Mrs. Mason. (Lightly.) Oh, I have a due sense of my unimportance.

Mason. (Sighing.) Well, Elizabeth's waiting for me. It's the only time I see the child. She's at such an interesting age—quite a little woman. I envy you the opportunity you have to be with her. You've been so busy with this Federation business lately, you'll be able to give the children more time when the election's over, won't you?

Mrs. Mason. (Lightly.) Oh, yes, of course. Though I know, after I've been an hour with Elizabeth, how it must feel to be on the witness stand. She asks so many questions I generally lie down to recover, and Bobby's almost as bad.

Mason. Such an alert, enquiring mind! Well, goodbye, dear. I wish you could get down to Long Island with them.

Mrs. Mason. Impossible! —Yes,—wait a minute! I believe I can, after all!

Mason. (Pleased.) Oh, I'm so glad, I hate to feel the children are always with servants.

Mrs. Mason. (With raised eyebrows.) Made-moiselle!

Mason. Well, even a sublimated servant!

Mrs. Mason. (Musing.) I'll have the girls from the Magdalen Home out there for lunch—and a lawn party after,—a little early in the season, but with the closed piazzas—we—

Mason. (Blankly.) Oh, I thought—

Mrs. Mason. (Absently.) Let me see—the southern porch—

Mason. (Kisses her.) Goodbye, I see you have the papers, but you ought to sue them for libel. You're much better looking.

Mrs. Mason. The Whirl has an editorial comment.

Mason. How you ever learned to get off a regular Fourth of July stump speech!

Mrs. Mason. Did you like it?

Mason. Must I agree with it?

Mrs. Mason. (Laughing.) Not as long as you don't disagree in public.

Mason. (Smiling.) No, that would never do in the world!

Mrs. Mason. Imagine the scandal. Why I can just see the headline: "The Masons Quarrel."—

Mason. "The charming leader of the Woman's Movement opposed by her husband"—

Mrs. Mason. "The Great Wall Street Magnate."

Mason. We'll make a compact—I'll never contradict you on the Woman Question, if you leave Finances to me—but, by the way, I wish you hadn't spoken of that nasty Sybil Fane affair.

Mrs. Mason. Why I received a lot of applause for that.

Mason. Well, keep your hands off that. Busy yourself with all your Federations and your Public Movements, but a woman who kills a man is no concern of yours.

Mrs. Mason. Every woman is my concern. Especially when she is in trouble.

Mason. Good Heavens! We can't convict a woman criminal without having the women's clubs buzzing about our ears! It's ridiculous!

Mrs. Mason. It's splendid! The new solidarity of the sex.

Mason. Solidarity be hanged! Rotten self-conceit you mean! (Warming up a bit.) A woman like that who shoots and kills a man—to take her part! Of course, it's all right to go ahead celebrating the achievements of all the women to whom we owe so much—the women Mayors and Stateswomen, the women balloonists and inventors, the women

lawyers and financiers, but for Heaven's sake let us draw the line at women murderers!

Mrs. Mason. There you go! Would you call a man a murderer when he was defending his honor?

Mason. I don't understand.

Mrs. Mason. Suppose it was a man shooting his wife's lover, he'd be a hero. You'd let him go scot-free.

Mason. Oh, no! Only the yellow journals would.

Mrs. Mason. You know perfectly well he'd be hailed as the noble protector of his hearth.

Mason. But—

Mrs. Mason. Sybil Fane only shot down her betrayer.

Mason. You believe that?

Mrs. Mason. Why not? What chance has a woman anyway? Even if she is fallen, it isn't fair—she's hounded and degraded, while a man—

Mason. (Interrupting.) Oh, that sort of talk is ridiculous—a man doesn't— there may be some injustice—but—

Mrs. Mason. (Heated.) There can be nothing but injustice so long as wives and mothers are classified with criminals and idiots.

Mason. But—

Mrs. Mason. (Going on in oratorical style.) What chance—(Here she nearly upsets the coffee pot—grabs it in time.)—has a woman to prove her innocence? Accused, tried and sentenced by men—

Mason. (Amused.) Well, I wouldn't give much for her chance if she's tried by women. Now she may get out of a tight place if she's devilish handsome, and a dozen susceptible—

Mrs. Mason. Give women the ballot and there will be no more weak pandering to men—there will be no fallen women—

Mason. (Hastily beating a retreat.) Goodbye!
(As he opens the door MRS. NORTON enters—he greets her and rushes off.)

Mrs. Norton. (A beautiful woman, dressed in the height of fashion.) How are you Cora? (Looks back.) Isn't he stunning—that husband of yours! Again for the nineteenth time I tell you I'm madly in love with him.

(Bends over and kisses her.)

Mrs. Mason. Stop your nonsense, Gilberte! Ring that bell there, will you?

Mrs. Norton. (Rings a bell.) I knew you wouldn't raise an eyebrow—you're too sure of him. It's a shame! Ought to have Ollie for six months—holding the reins taut—you'd appreciate the cinch you've got. What a pair of shoulders! The way he

carries his clothes! —Cora, I bet you a woman can't look at that mouth without longing to kiss it.

Mrs. Mason. Will you stop?

(Enter maid who takes breakfast tray away.)

Maid. (Carrying off tray.) At what time, Ma'am, do you wish the machine?

Mrs. Mason. Ten o'clock.

(Exit Maid.)

Mrs. Norton. (Arranging hang of skirt and veil before mirror.) Why should I stop? If I don't talk men, you'll talk women—mine's much more amusing.

(Turns from mirror—scrutinizes Mrs. Mason—lifts up her chin carefully.)

No, not a wrinkle—not a gray hair—can't understand it.

Mrs. Mason. What *are* you doing?

Mrs. Norton. Waist still measures twenty-two?

Mrs. Mason. For Heaven's sake, Gilberte!

Mrs. Norton. (Reproachfully.) How you can prefer the society of freaks and frumps!

Mrs. Mason. Didn't you enjoy last night?

Mrs. Norton. Enjoy it! You know I went only to hear you—you dear! You really were a marvel—a

dream! There you stood, the most provokingly beautiful woman, in a faultlessly fitting Paquin gown, spouting like any rough and tumble orator from Tennessee—if I'd been a man I'd have been tempted to stop some of those flowing sentences with a kiss

Mrs. Mason. You are—

Mrs. Norton. —A self-sacrificing angel—sat between a highbrow who snorted up his soup, and a solemn woman who was fletcherizing her filet when I'd finished my ice cream. But, tell me—what do you really do it for?

Mrs. Mason. What?

Mrs. Norton. Oh, speechifying—edifying—

Mrs. Mason. You see nothing in waking up a sex?

Mrs. Norton. (Maliciously.) Oh, yes!

Mrs. Mason. Well, then?

Mrs. Norton. But not *my* sex.

Mrs. Mason. You're incorrigible. You see no thrill in bringing others to their feet?

Mrs. Norton. Oh, yes!

Mrs. Mason. In upliftng one half of the Human Race—

Mrs. Norton. Uplifting? Off their knees?

Mrs. Mason. Oh, what's the use? It's the indifference and inertia of women like you—that's the chief obstacle to our onward march.

(While Mrs. Norton speaks, Mrs. Mason rises, slips on an elaborate peignoir, rings for the Maid, who enters and brushes and fixes her hair before dressing table.)

Mrs. Norton. Yes, I admit it—what's that you call us? Oh, "man-dominated women!"—that's it! But isn't that about what the Lord had in mind when He performed that little operation on Adam's rib? Yes, one of your speakers last night got up and poked fun at the "Pernicious habit of man-propitiation." (Clapping hands.) Delicious! Yes, I'm man-dominated—but you're woman-dominated. You get your thrills from the hand claps of women, I get mine from the hand clasp of a man. You talk of thrills! Cora, did you ever have a man kiss you in the middle of the back—there! (Touches Mrs. Mason between her shoulders.) Talk about thrills!

Mrs. Mason. (In disgust.) Gilberte! Of course, you won't be serious!

Mrs. Norton. Yes, I can be, too—I can quote from your own speech, "Women are the guardians at the fountain sources and household sources of thought."... "Woman is more conscientious, more pure, more devoted to the higher life, she will see

that only good men hold offices."—say, Cora, suppose the bad man's her son?

Mrs. Mason. Gilberte!

Mrs. Norton. Well, really, you know, they do have mothers!

Mrs. Mason. She won't vote for gamblers and drunkards—

Mrs. Norton. Unless they're her husbands? Eh!

Mrs. Mason. (Impatiently.) You know women are more law-abiding and they will never bribe.

(A knock at door. Enter FRENCH NURSERY GOVERNESS.)

Mademoiselle. (In broken English.) I beg Madame's pardon—but Bobby insists that you promised to take him to the circus tomorrow afternoon.

(Mrs. Norton looks on, much amused during conversation.)

Mrs. Mason. Pshaw! So I did! Tell him you'll take him.

Mademoiselle. I heard Madame say she had the meeting of the Playground Association.

Mrs. Mason. (To Mrs. Norton.) There's a splendid work you ought to take up. Think of the poor little boys who never have a chance to romp and play in the air.

Mrs. Norton. (Meaningly.) You ought to take Bobby there.

Mrs. Mason. Nonsense! It's for the poor children who have no place to go.

(Mrs. Norton smiles.)

Mademoiselle. So I told him I would take him. But he say you promised.

Mrs. Mason. I forgot to look at my book first—he was teasing so.

Mademoiselle. He's kicking and screaming now—bit me right there. See! (Holds up a finger.) Shall I bring him to you?

Mrs. Mason. (Hastily.) Oh, no! Tell him to be a good little boy and he can ask his little cousin Marie.

Mademoiselle. Très bien, Madame!

(Exits.)

Mrs. Norton. Well, goodbye, I really ran in for a moment just to hand you this.

(Gives her a bundle she had brought in with her. Maid busies herself getting out costume, hat, etc. from closets and arranging them in room for Mrs. Mason to wear.)

(Her hair is dressed. She rises from chair. Opening bundle she reveals yards and yards of superb lace.)

Mrs. Mason. Oh, how lovely! It was awfully good of you to take the trouble.

Mrs. Norton. (Carelessly.) No trouble—only with it wound about my stockings I did have an awkward gait. I was so afraid Ollie would ask me what was the matter when I waddled down the gangplank. (Laughs.)

Mrs. Mason. (Laughing with her.) Clever! And they're so particular now. I just love to get the best of those Custom House Officers.

Mrs. Norton. So do I, but Ollie would never have forgiven me.

Mrs. Mason. (Complacently.) Men are so queer about those things.

Mademoiselle. (Entering.) Pardon!—but Bobby, he say he won't go with Marie. She pinch him—he want you—he say you promise—

Mrs. Mason. Children are so unreasonable! Tell him if he's a good boy, I'll take him down in the morning and buy him a pony.

(As Mademoiselle turns to go, Mrs. Mason continues, but it is evident she has not heard and closes door behind her.)

Oh dear! Oh! Mademoiselle! I forgot I can't take him tomorrow.

Mrs. Norton. (Kissing her goodbye.) Well, goodbye! I'm so glad you think women never bribe!

(Maid enters with card—Mrs. Norton glances at it.)

Good Heavens! The Sampson-Black woman who goes around preaching the dignity of Labor and the Poltroonery of Plutocracy. Cora, how can you!

Mrs. Mason. She's a mighty shrewd woman all the same! She's managing my campaign, you know for the Presidency of the Federation.

(To maid.) Show her up—she won't mind.

(Maid exits—Mrs. Norton follows her.)

Mrs. Sampson-Black. (Entering and looking back.) Wasn't that Mrs. Norton?

(She is large and impressive; professional speaker's voice.)

Mrs. Mason. Good morning. —Yes.

(Mrs. Sampson-Black is immensely impressed. Sits down with a sigh of contentment—looks around luxurious room with delight. It is evident she smacks her lips over every sign of luxury; the luxurious fittings of the delicate dressing table, the bed hangings—everything delights her.)

Mrs. Sampson-Black. I thought it was Mrs. Oliver T. H. Norton—I've seen her picture in the paper often among the prominent divorcees.

(With an awe struck gasp.) She married her correspondent, didn't she?

Mrs. Mason. (Coldly.) I think you came, Mrs. Black—

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Yes, to congratulate you on your marvelous performance last night.

Mrs. Mason. Did you see how Mrs. Parker-Gordon wriggled every time I made a point?

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Did I? Why, she got her straight front all to one side. But she's more determined than ever to be the next President of the Federation—she— (Maid enters.)

Maid. Mrs. Thurston at the 'phone, Ma'am—says would you please tell her the hour for dinner, Ma'am—

Mrs. Mason. Why, eight, of course.

Maid. But she says how the opera begins—

Mrs. Mason. Oh, very well—we'll make it seven-thirty. Just 'phone Mr. Mason, too.

(Exit Maid. Mrs. Sampson-Black beams.)

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Is that the Mrs. Thurston where the Duke is staying?

Mrs. Mason. (Carelessly.) Yes. We're taking them to the opera after dinner.

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Do you believe the Duke is really attentive to Cicely Thurston?

Mrs. Mason. (Drawing herself up.) Really, Mrs. Black—I must leave in a few moments—and—

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Well—Mrs. Parker-Gordon's so upset, she's going to make a counter move. What do you think she's done?

Mrs. Mason. What?

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Went straight over to where Mrs. Truesdale was sitting—the Mrs. Wilton Truesdale who gave up her children to her husband on payment of a million dollars—

Mrs. Mason. (Impatiently.) Yes—well?

Mrs. Sampson-Black. And got her to give a building for the Working Girls' Union.

Mrs. Mason. How nice!

Mrs. Sampson-Black. "How nice!" Humph! Mrs. Parker-Gordon did it only to show her power. They think it owing to her Mrs. Truesdale came out for suffrage. The cat! Working girls are all the rage now—

(Turning suddenly to Mrs. Mason.) We must do something, if you don't want Mrs. Parker-Gordon to be President.

Mrs. Mason. I gave the Playground to the children.

Mrs. Sampson-Black. That was eight months ago—besides playgrounds aren't it just now—factory girls are.

Mrs. Mason. (Smiles; reflects.) We might get up a fine blow-out for the opening of the Playground—or—let me see—Day Nursery? Nothing specially new—Soup Kitchen—antediluvian—

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Model tenements?

Mrs. Mason. Been done! There's a good deal of interest just now in pure milk—

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Tuberculosis is most popular.

Mrs. Mason. Um—yes! Not very original though! I have it—the very thing!

Mrs. Sampson-Black. (Excited.) What?

Mrs. Mason. Did you notice how everyone was fired by my reference to Sybil Fane?—Last night?

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Yes—the papers mentioned that especially.

(Mrs. Mason looks about bed—doesn't lay her hand on the paper she wants—looks for another and finds it. Folds it and hands it to Mrs. Sampson-Black. Mrs. Mason reads it over her shoulder.)

(Mrs. Sampson-Black reading aloud here and there from the paper, nodding her head, delighted.)

Excellent! "Man-made laws!" Oh, that—that was fine—"When the honor of a woman will be as important as the honor of a man"—Splendid! Splendid!

Mrs. Mason. Did you like that about throwing off the shackles of man's pleasure?

Mrs. Sampson-Black. So strong! So virile! But I do not exactly see—

Mrs. Mason. (Smiling.) Don't you? (Mrs. Sampson-Black looks puzzled.) What do you say to a National Association to rescue Sybil Fane from the electric chair?

Mrs. Sampson-Black. What!

Mrs. Mason. (Dramatically addressing an imaginary audience.) Here is a poor woman at bay—on trial for her life for slaying the brute who has robbed her of her virginal innocence. Who tries her? Women who would sympathize with her? Women who would seek to punish the miscreant who wrought the devastation and ruin? Women ever ready to hold out a helping hand to a member of their own sex? No! No! The poor hunted thing is surrounded by men—men like that brute who outraged her

womanhood—men who will smile at her agony, gloat over her shame—no, it must not, shall not be—I call on every woman—her sisters—to come forward with outstretched hand—with outstretched hand— (Slightly breathless.)

Mrs. Sampson-Black. (Clapping her hands.) Wonderful! Splendid!

Mrs. Mason. (Seats herself.) Think it will take, eh?

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Like wild-fire! We'll make Mrs. Parker-Gordon First Vice-President.

Mrs. Mason. (Takes up house telephone.) Send me Mrs. Deming, please.

(To Mrs. Sampson-Black.) While I'm full of it we'll dash off a circular—

Mrs. Sampson-Black. They'll never think of putting her in the Federation over your head. This will just be in full swing when the election comes off—you're sure to get it now.

Mrs. Deming. (Entering.) You wish me?

Mrs. Mason. Yes, sit right down and take this short hand—

(Dictating.) When it has come to pass as it has that an innocent woman avenging her honor—

Mrs. Sampson-Black. The helpless victim of man's lust—

(CURTAIN falls on Mrs. Mason continuing the dictation.)

ACT II

Private office of John Mason, elegant, typical of a man important in the world of Finance. Mason seated at his desk, looking over a large mail; shows signs of impatience and annoyance. Pushes button on desk. (Enter office boy.)

Mason. Not here yet?

Boy. No, sir.

Mason. (Continues looking over letters.) H'm.

(Exit Boy.) (Mason rings again. Enter Boy.)

Tell her she needn't take off her things. Understand—come right in.

Boy. Yes, sir. (Exit Boy.)

Mason. (Shoves aside chair, pulls out watch, looks at it, takes up paper, glances over it.)

Humph! "Municipal Housekeepers"—I say Municipal Meddlers! This thing is going too far.

(Desk telephone buzzes. Mason takes up receiver.)

Hullo! Yes, yes, go ahead. Yes, I understand—today at four o'clock—the Secretary of the Treasury—confidential—of course. Yes—yes—goodbye.

(Makes some notes on engagement pad. Takes up paper again; starts up, opens door and glances into outer office, closes door; grunts, takes up paper again—a telegram is brought in; Mason reads it with satisfaction, consults note book which he pulls from pocket.)

Fine! By George! he's doing it!

(Takes up paper and reads aloud.) "Wherever woman penetrates, whether factory, shop or office, there penetrates some ray of light, some touch of grace and refinement."

(Enter ROSE MALONE, overdressed and vulgar; dyed hair arranged in tremendous pompadour, artificial, stiff curls behind; big, unsteady picture hat, pretentious but of cheapest grade; coarse, purple motoring veil arranged over hat; everything about her a poor imitation of fashionable women; everything as unsuited as possible to the needs of a wage earner. Looks underfed and unhealthy. She chews gum, regards Mason with a bold stare.)

Rose. (Speaks with a raucous voice.) Want me?

Mason. (Eyeing her in disgust, emphatically.)
Want you? No!

(Regards column he has just been reading with cynical amusement.)

Rose. (About to go.) Wrong number!

Mason. (Coldly.) No, I *sent* for you—to dismiss you.

Rose. What's the row? Ain't I givin' satisfaction?

Mason. (Looking at watch.) You are twelve minutes late today, yesterday you were fifteen minutes late; the day before—

Rose. I tripped up as I ran for a car—

(Holding up bedraggled skirt.) —had to pin it up.

Mason. And yesterday I suppose you dropped one of your blondine sausage rolls—

Rose. Cut that out! (Goes to door.)

Mason. One moment, Miss Malone. I wonder if you ever reflected that if a machine were as poorly equipped for its day's work as you are, it would be fit only for the junk shop.

Rose. I don't see why you call me back to insult me. If I'm dismissed, let me go.

Mason. Yes, I suppose you are insulted. And yet do you never think of yourself as a machine equipped to do certain work? Do you try to do your day's work with the least possible friction?

You clog, you hamper yourself in every conceivable way and yet you want to be considered an effective bit of mechanism in the serious world of business. Look here, at best it isn't an easy proposition. With your efficiency at its highest point, there will be days when the grind becomes too much for you, and you wish you never were born. Yet you put in more time wriggling into a waist that buttons hinderside foremost than in eating your breakfast, you spend more money on an utterly preposterous hat than on a month's luncheons.

(Rose gazes at him fascinated, at first too astonished to resent what he says. Gradually she is overcome and buries her head in her arms.)

You literally fight your way along the windy cañons of our streets, tripping, stumbling, with be-draggled skirts and soaked shoes, and unsteady hat, while the cold eats into your marrow because you change the cut of your coat so often you can't afford a warm one. In one sense you are as underdressed as in another sense you are overdressed. (With growing warmth.) Therefore, I tell you the average working girl for all the wonders one hears of her, is about the silliest proposition the world has struck yet. Even the woman who frankly lives to please has her place. At least she isn't engaged in a hand to hand, life and death struggle with nature. There's only one end possible. Nature is never defeated. She is infinitely patient. Sometimes you think you're on top. But she's only waiting; why every squirrel, every dog can tell you that—they know it's follow the rules of her game or go to the wall. Obedience or death, there's no choice. That's why I say there's nothing

on God's earth so defiantly preposterous as the wage-earning woman.

Rose. (*Whimpering.*) I don't see why a poor girl—

Mason. (*Disgusted.*) There you go! Bawling! Can one ever tell the plain truth to a woman!

Rose. (*Rising angrily.*) Oh! a woman, a woman! I'm sick of having it thrown up to me that I'm a woman. I don't ask any favors. Just treat me fair and square. Just forget I'm a woman. I've got a right same's any man to earn my living.

Mason. (*Bitterly sarcastic.*) Earning your own living, are you? I'd respect you if you were.

Rose. What d'you mean?

Mason. You're not earning your living.

Rose. I am! I am!

Mason. You're doing your vulgar little best to make some man earn it for you.

(*Rose is overwhelmed. Hides her face in her arms again.*)

"*Forget* that you're a woman!" Do you let us forget it for a single moment? Yes, you want us *to forget it on pay day*, but at no other time. I'd have respect for your "economically independent woman" who's filling the magazines just now, if you only would play fair. But you don't—you don't know the meaning of the word. Have you forgotten

your sex, eh? Not for a little bit—brought it into working hours—that's all you've done. Why! you're not honest, I tell you—it isn't fair to the girl who stays at home. You slam the door on her face as you step out on the street and you call back to her "Pooh! you can stay at home waiting for a man to pop. I don't need any man to lean on. I can fight my own battle." But you don't—you're fighting the same old eternal battle of the sexes, and what's more you're fighting that girl who's staid home and fights fair! She's frank, she's honest. She plays the game in play hours. You play it all the time—you skulk into the men's world flying a flag of truce but there's no truce about it. There are some men, God help them, who can't get enough of it, but when I'm participating in a large underwriting, or dictating a letter to a bank President in Valparaiso, I'm not hankering after the flash of a yard of bare arms nor for the neatest ankle in the world. It's raw red wrists and a sack coat for mine!

(Rose goes to door, blubbering as she gets there. Mason calls her back in business tones.)

Oh! one thing more, Miss Malone—kindly give as the reason of your departure just plain incompetence; don't say that I tried to kiss you.

Rose. (Turning.) Brute! .

(Exits.) (EWING enters door as Rose goes out. EWING is a Southerner, talks

with distinct accent; about 50 years old, carefully groomed and punctilious.)

Ewing. What's the matter?

Mason. From this moment on, John Mason & Co. is going to bear the market on women. We'll make telephone girls and typewriting ladies as scarce in Wall Street as a dollar in a church collection.

Ewing. (Looking back sympathetically.) Why, the poor little thing's been crying.

Mason. (Snorts.) "Poor little thing!" Ewing, you're as easy—

Ewing. (Drawing himself up.) Is it not natural, sir, that a man should dislike to see a woman,—a poor, defenseless woman in tears? And it pains one more to think a man can have caused these tears!

Mason. You are so delightfully last century!

Ewing. A woman's eyes should be sacred wells of joy and happiness.

Mason. Ewing, I suppose you'd want to take off your hat to a shrieking suffragette manacled to an iron fence. You are one of the few who can look on a woman in a three foot nuisance hat and a hobble skirt as something fine and holy.

Ewing. To me, sir, a woman always bears her crown of womanhood.

Mason. Sometimes I think it's you fellows that are largely responsible for the nonsense of our women folks.

Ewing. How do you mean?

Mason. Oh, you have accustomed the women to adoration and there aren't quite enough like you to go 'round. There are a lot of unthroned queens shy of subjects. The scent of incense is in their nostrils and they can't get it out for all that there's no altar left and no candles.

Ewing. (Stiffly.) A woman, a pure woman, is the noblest work of God. (Slight groan.)

Mason. (Alarmed, rushes up to him.) What is it? You are pale. You are not well. Sit down. (Hands him a drink of water.)

Ewing. (Drinks.) Thank you. It is past. A touch of that sciatica again. The doctor told me I should not stand.

Mason. (Grimly.) And I bet you gave up your seat in the sub to one of these purifying "angel presences" and clung to a strap all the way down. I bet she never even thanked you.

Ewing. (Again stiffly.) I could not let a woman stand—a delicate woman.

Mason. (Losing patience.) Don't you see, Ewing, why I call you a left-over—an anachronism? All these lovely theories about kowtowing to the women.

taking off your hat, and giving up your seat, shielding them with your strong right arm and all that sort of thing, was all right so long as they staid in their place. Heavens! We men had no kick coming from us. We didn't mind slaving for them and ponying up everything we had. But I tell you, man, it can't go on. They mustn't expect to have their cake and eat it too. If they want to come out into the world and take our salaries they have got to take the bad with the good. If they keep on yelling for equality, some day they'll wake up good and hard and find that they've got it. By Jove! The time's pretty nigh come, I tell you, when it's up to us men to give them a dose that will sicken them of it. Why, there isn't a woman now for all her shouting has an idea of getting equality. What she wants is privilege—privilege with a capital P, and woe to the man who takes a dotlet from an i.

Ewing. On the contrary, I am amazed at their pluck—their daring! It is like a handful of sheep coming of themselves and demanding equality of wolves. And the sacrifices they make without whimper! Look at your wife's secretary, Mrs. Deming.

Mason. Oh, I have nothing against her. She's the right sort.

Ewing. She is an angel.

Mason. (Looking amused at him.) Yes. I don't mind the real eighteen carat kind. But we men have

to put up with a heap of imitation articles all right. Now just look at this:

(Takes up a newspaper.) Here's part of my wife's speech last night:

(Reads.) "At the flutter of her garments the brutishness and roughness of man flies away with a hoarse croak, never to appear again."

Ewing. Beautifully put!

Mason. Hell! Do you think that Malone type of woman such a purifying influence? I tell you, Ewing, don't fool yourself; we men were better off before she came. I don't say, mind you, that a lot of men in an office are absorbed in growing a crop of wings—I grant you there was plenty of vulgarity, if you choose, but it was a sexless vulgarity, it wasn't the Patchouli, have-you-seen-the-show, Peek-a-boo waist variety.

Ewing. Nonsense, the influence of woman has always been refining.

Mason. His Satanic majesty never swears nor chews. It's a damnable kind of refinement woman brings. A woman in her place is an angel, out of her place she needs an "angel." But what's the use, we two can talk till doomsday and never agree over lovely woman.—See that cable from Brown and Brown?

Ewing. Yep!

Mason. It's going all right. Anything from Paris?

Ewing. Within a month it will be listed on the Bourse.

Mason. (Gleeful.) Haven't failed, have I? I tell you, it means a lot to me to succeed. It's a big thing.

Ewing. Very big. Splendid!

Mason. (Chuckling.) I tell you when it comes to finance, the women aren't in it!

Ewing. Their delicate sense of honor would not permit them—

Mason. (Bends over the ticker. Looks up amused.)

Ever carry an account for a woman?

(Crosses over to desk and points out a part of paper to Ewing.)

Read that!

Ewing. (Reads.) "Mrs. Mason's husband sat through the speech with an appreciative smile upon his handsome countenance."

Mason. Discerning reporter, that!

Ewing. "Later on he said if he possessed one tithe of her eloquence, he'd own all the rest of the railroads he didn't own already."

Mason. Wasn't within a mile of the place. But you see, Ewing, they had to get that in to get the correct perspective on the picture—just the right touch of adulation. As if I, John Mason, have nothing else to do but go listen to a lot of woman's twaddle. Why, I'm too busy chasing the elusive dollar to go to women's meetings and hear the men jawed. Did you ever hear them, Ewing? No? Well, you'd think every woman hung from early morn to dewy eve over the wash tubs and every man just sat on a gold mounted throne and issued orders to God Almighty. As if all the time he wasn't with his nose to the grindstone trying to scrape enough together to pay his wife's milliner.

Ewing. (Sighing.) If only I had them to pay!

Mason. Yes, you are one of these darned idiots of American men that is just ready to lie down and let any woman walk over you. I'm afraid with us American husbands it's a case of spare the rod and spoil the wife.

Ewing. (Laughing.) Well, you yourself are not exactly a paragon of sternness. You give your wife a pretty long rope.

Mason. (Muttering.) Yes, and I guess she'll manage to hang herself with it. **(Aloud.)** But I tell you it's no laughing matter. The whole country's gone mad. I really think, old chap, we men shall have to take a little time off from business and square

things before it is too late. What with hysterical legislation and W. C. T. U., and school children waving banners, and prayer meetings at the polls—and it isn't only America that's paying the piper—not by any means! It's England, it's Finland, it's Russia, it's all over. Even the Turk, the unspeakable Turk's lost his grip. I sort of depended on the Turk, and his nice quiet kind of wife, but even he's gone back on us.—Did you let that Irrigation Company have that million?

Ewing. Yes, and I've that report ready for the Executive Committee of the D. T. & W., today and—

(Boy brings in a card. Mason glances at it in amazement.)

Mason. Mrs. Alexander Mortimer! Well, well! Show her in. Excuse me, Ewing, just take this, it's from the Mayor—tell him I'll serve on that committee.

(Thrusting a letter into his hands.) You'll know what to say—I must see this lady a moment.
(Exit Ewing.)

(Mrs. Mortimer is shown in. She is dressed in deepest mourning; flings back her veil.)

(Simultaneously.)
Mrs. Mortimer. John!
Mason. Anne!

Mason. (Takes her hand.) This is good, to see you.

Mrs. Mortimer. (Overcome.) After all these years!

Mason. (Leading her to a seat.) What is it, Anne?

Mrs. Mortimer. Help me, John! Help me!

Mason. Help you, of course, but what? How? You are in trouble, in mourning. Who? Aleck died ten years ago—not—

(Mrs. Mortimer nods her head with an agonized expression.)

not John, your boy? Why, how old is he?

Mrs. Mortimer. (Sobbing quietly in her handkerchief.) Yes, John, my boy John—just twenty-two.

Mason. (Pityingly.) Husband and son—both taken from you.

Mrs. Mortimer. (Looking at him.) And you, John, you—most of me died then—it seems as if one can suffer just so much and no more.

Mason. (Gently.) Yes, Anne, you suffered. We both suffered, but it was right. It was for the best—you've never doubted that?

Mrs. Mortimer. (Wildly.) For the best? I suppose so—twenty thousand clergymen are ding-donging that into us! Suffer? Most people think only men suffer—like that. They think women love,

and yearn and waste away, but suffer as a man does? The sleepless nights—the wild moments—how did I ever live through it?

Mason. There would have been no happiness for us, Anne. We both cared too much for Aleck to deceive him. But tell me about John—was he ill long?

Mrs. Mortimer. Never ill a day.

Mason. Not ill? An accident?

Mrs. Mortimer. Do you mean to say you know nothing about it?

Mason. Nothing.

Mrs. Mortimer. But the papers are full of it.

Mason. One of those horrible motor accidents?

Mrs. Mortimer. You haven't read it, you say?

Mason. No! I've been in Europe, just back, and I don't give much time to the papers.

Mrs. Mortimer. You haven't read about the trial of Sybil Fane?

Mason. (Jumping from his chair.) Anne! you don't mean—

Mrs. Mortimer. (Sadly.) Yes, yes—it was my boy, shot down—dead! Murdered!

Mason. Good God! But this woman—what she says—

Mrs. Mortimer. (Angrily.) You mean about defending her honor and all that? Bah! you don't believe that stuff, do you? Why, she's an adventuress through and through, a common, reckless—now she's on trial for her life she suddenly takes stock in the chastity idea—sees a loop hole of escape. Why it was rage, just pure jealous rage—crazy about John— (Breaks out wildly.) Oh! my boy, my boy! They've murdered you, they've killed you—they've taken you away from me and now they want to make out you're a villain and a seducer. Oh, my God!

Mason. Calm yourself, Anne, Anne. Tell me all about it.

Mrs. Mortimer. When he came, I lived for one thing, to bring him up like you, with your ideals, your sense of personal respect and honor. (Deliberately.) my boy was a good boy, you understand?

Mason. Yes.

Mrs. Mortimer. He was handsome, very handsome. Here!

(Turns a locket on her breast and shows him picture.)

Look!

Mason. (Looks at it, moved.) What a beautiful face! (Musingly.) That's Aleck's forehead.

Mrs. Mortimer. Isn't it strange! During all those months I had one face before me, yours, everywhere you, till I thought I'd grow mad, and yet he looked like Aleck.

Mason. Don't!

Mrs. Mortimer. Well, you see for yourself. You know how a face like that sets women crazy. You understand—there is always something comical to the world about a man resisting temptation.

Mason. Yes, I know.

Mrs. Mortimer. She was a beautiful woman, you can imagine how it maddened her—so accustomed to stir men, to have a mere boy resist her. It turned a momentary impulse into a fixed resolve. She followed him—they had terrible scenes. He consented to see her this time only because she swore it was for the last time.

Mason. Terrible! But when you entered this room, you said "Help me, John." What did you mean? What can I do?

Mrs. Mortimer. Help me turn all my property into ready money to defend my boy's name—to convict his murderess!

Mason. Of course! Count on me. But you will have the District Attorney behind you—all the power of the law, and of this great city. There is

no question about it, if you can prove she was, as you say, a common adventuress we can convict her.

Mrs. Mortimer. Yes, but my lawyer warned me it was difficult nowadays to convict a woman of anything—if the situation were reversed, it would be easy. He says New York particularly has gone off half cocked on the White Slave Traffic and the idea that every woman is an angel and every man a brute. You see every public speaker, every woman's club has been spreading this atmosphere of adulation, "woman the purifier and sanctifier of our homes" and "woman the uplifter of our ideals." It's about time some of us mothers of sons spoke out. Our boys are brutes, are they? Then who tears them from our arms and makes them brutes? Beasts are they? Then who has made them so? My God! My God!

Mason. Anne, calm yourself.

Mrs. Mortimer. Calm myself when they're trying to let my boy's murderer go scot free? Calm myself! Why it's your fault—it's the fault of all you men who know the truth. You let these women run on, cackling about their superior virtue, their wonderful morals! Why don't you tell them? Every handsome man knows it's a lie, a lie—why don't the good men tell their mothers, their sisters, their wives what they go through, with the bad women on every side, ready to wreck their lives? Tell them! Tell them! Who would believe our story—that you were the stronger of the two?

Mason. Anne!

Mrs. Mortimer. You know it, you know when a woman is really carried away by passion she forgets everything—honor, self respect, virtue,—bah! for once why not tell the truth? I never questioned your love for me—how could I? Your glowing eyes, your pallor, your cold hands, your quivering lips. God! No! Yet your sense of honor, your loyalty to a business partner and friend, was stronger than mine for a husband. You threw up everything risked your career, started out all over again, to save that honor—who would believe it? One of these women who rant about their high ideals?

Mason. Yes, perhaps we men have kept silence too long. We must down this orgy of self esteem. Your lawyer is quite right. It is not easy to convict a woman of wrong-doing. (Hands her a paper.) Have you seen that?

Mrs. Mortimer. (Reads.) (Nods.) “Here is an innocent woman shooting a man—or shall we call him a fiend in man’s clothes?—to defend her honor. Until woman receives justice at the polls, she will receive it nowhere.” Good Heavens! Why, one of the noble band of shriekers after Woman’s Rights is a divorcee who owes what shred of reputation she’s got to the chivalry of her first husband— (Tears paper angrily in pieces.) Ugh!

Mason. That is from a speech of a prominent woman at a big banquet last night.

Mrs. Mortimer. The idiot!

Mason. (Picks up a part of the paper, shows her the name.) You see!

Mrs. Mortimer. (Reads.) Your wife!

Mason. I think that last sentence that you hold in such horror is in her eyes quite a gem.

Mrs. Mortimer. Your wife! Then I need you more than ever. She's a power. She has a tremendous backing. She'll be sure to follow this up. You'll tell her the truth, you'll persuade her to go no further?

Mason. I'm not so sure I can do that.

Mrs. Mortimer. You won't desert me? John, you're all I have left in the world.

Mason. Why, of course. I'll do my best, only I may not be able to come out into the open. Are you sure there's no proof?

Mrs. Mortimer. (Sadly.) No she's been clever— (Looks up at him.) But you believe me, John? You know my boy told the truth. You'll help me prove she's an unscrupulous adventuress? John, when you went off to Europe and I had to take up the threads of life alone, hating existence, praying for death, soon I found I was no longer alone, and then I prayed for life and strength and I wasn't sorry for any-

thing—for I knew if I hadn't gone through what I did I would never have been a mother.

Mason. Hush!

Mrs. Mortimer. Yes I mean just what I say. My boy was the son of my husband, yet but for you, he would never have been born. I wonder how many women bear their husbands children who belong by every spiritual and mental tie to another? What was I before I knew you? A wife, but an unawakened child. John, you are as responsible for John's existence as if you were his father. Give me back the good name of my boy—our boy!

(Mason looks at her gravely for a moment in silence, goes to telephone book; glances at it; takes up the desk telephone, asks for a number.)

Hullo, is this the office of the District Attorney?

(CURTAIN falls as he continues speaking.)

ACT III

A fortnight later.

The Library in the Mason home, every detail superb. The room is apparently unoccupied, although seated in a deep easy-chair EWING reads unobserved. Enter the BUTLER carrying a tray filled with a huge pile of envelopes. Following him comes MRS. DEMING who appears tired and listless.

Mrs. Deming. That's it, Perkins, put it down here on the desk. (Perkins, about to go, turns as she addresses him.) How is your little boy?

Perkins. Thank you, Mrs. Deming, doing nicely.

Mrs. Deming. (With trembling voice.) Quite out of danger?

Perkins. The Doctors think so, ma'am. Thank you for asking.

Mrs. Deming. Do you get off to see him?

Perkins. I spend the nights there, ma'am,—but (Looking about.) don't say anything—you see Mrs. Mason is so nervous, if she knew there was scarlet fever at home, ma'am, and me going back and forth!

Mrs. Deming. (Rising.) Oh, there's danger to Bobby!

Perkins. (Earnestly.) No, no, Mrs. Deming—I'm most careful. I don't go into the room—once I just peeped through the door—but I never go in—and I change every scrap of clothes. No, ma'am, please don't say anything—but it's hard like not being able to be with the kid.

Mrs. Deming. (Seating herself, speaking sadly.) But his mother is with him—his mother isn't separated from him, as I am from my darling little boy.

Perkins. No, ma'am. That's so ma'am. It's too bad you can't go to see your little boy. But don't take on so ma'am, he'll come around too,—I'm sure of it. Children get these sicknesses, but they get over them, ma'am.

Mrs. Deming. (Drying her eyes.) Thank you, Perkins, thank you so much—good night—

Perkins. Good night, ma'am. (Exits.)

(Mrs. Deming starts addressing the envelopes—drops her head in her arms and sobs.)

Ewing. (Turns around in his chair, flings book on floor, starts up and approaches her.) Mrs. Deming—I—oh please!

Mrs. Deming. (Startled.) Oh! how you frightened me! Were you there all the time? I didn't see you.

Ewing. (Gently.) Dear me! Dear me! Your little boy sick. And you do not go to him?

Mrs. Deming. How can I? (Pointing to the envelopes.) And so much work just now in connection with this Sybil Fane Association.

Ewing. Yes, yes, of course, but surely Mrs. Mason will understand, will—

Mrs. Deming. (Trying to control herself and speaking in business-like tones.) If I go of course I can not come back for a long time—because of Bobby, and you see I need the money, I cannot afford to lose my position.

Ewing. Dear me! Dear me! But I cannot conceive of such a thing as a mother kept from her sick boy because—because— (Explosively.) Why nothing under Heaven should make it necessary for a mother to leave the bed side of her son. He needs his mother. He must have his mother.

Mrs. Deming. (Smiling quietly.) And he must have his food, he needs his food. And he must have clothes. Ah! he grows so quickly he needs his clothes. Better no mother, than no food and clothes.

Ewing. (Jumps up and paces the room.) A mother separated from her only child because she

is the bread-winner. It is preposterous. There is something wrong somewhere. (Stops before her.) Have you got a nurse?

Mrs. Deming. Her wages would exactly equal mine.

Ewing. I shall get one at once. Where is he? I shall go down and see that he wants for nothing—nothing. We'll get the best doctors from town—we'll—

Mrs. Deming. (Touched.) You are too good.

Ewing. If you only knew how I thank God for the opportunity.

Mrs. Deming. Really, Mr. Ewing.

Ewing. (Nervously.) Would you mind taking down a bit of dictation?

Mrs. Deming. (Surprised and looking at her neglected work in some hesitancy.) Why—I—

Ewing. Just a bit.

Mrs. Deming. (Draws out typewriter, prepares it, gets ready.) Very well.

Ewing. (Paces up and down.) Begin: "I have loved you from the moment you came here as Mrs. Mason's secretary."

(Mrs. Deming embarrassed—stops.)

(Ewing assuming business tone.) Pray go on. "I have never dared speak as I know I am too old for such a beautiful woman as you."

(Mrs. Deming stops again.)

(Same business tones.) Do I go too quickly? Will you please continue?

(Mrs Deming smiles and continues.)

"No man is fit to offer himself to a woman, but I will do my utmost to make you happy. We shall send for your boy and you will never again be separated. Try to forget that I am old and nothing like the husband you deserve, and remember only that the devotion of the rest of my life will be yours."

(Mrs. Deming stops, shoves her chair away from the desk and wipes her eyes.)

(Ewing goes to her, takes her hand, she acquiesces, looks up into his face and smiles. The door opens and Mason enters—they separate quickly.)

Mason. (Nervously to Mrs. Deming as Ewing leaves the room.) I am expecting an important 'phone message, Mrs. Deming. I think I shall wait here for it.

Mrs. Deming. Very well, Mr. Mason. Do I disturb you?

Mason. (Seats himself and reads paper.) Not at all, go right on. What are you doing?

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Mrs. Deming. (Removes dictation from machine, kisses it, places it in her bosom and begins to address envelopes.) Appeals for Funds to every Woman's Club in the country.

Mason. For funds?

Mrs. Deming. To join the Sybil Fane Association.

Mason. (Annoyed.) H'm! (After a pause during which he reads.) All over the country, eh?

Mrs. Deming. Yes, it is quite remarkable how the idea has taken hold.

Mason. H'm! Fane and Freedom—that sort of thing eh?

Mrs. Deming. (Smiling.) It certainly is right in the popular vein.

(Telephone rings, Mrs. Deming takes off receiver.)

Hullo! Yes?

Mason. For me?

Mrs. Deming. (Speaking into telephone.) To interview Mrs. Mason. I understand. Yes, let her come right away. (Hangs up receiver.)

Mason. (Looks annoyed.) More newspapers?

Mrs. Deming. (Suavely.) The Evening Whirl.

Mason. (Grunts in disgust.) So you think the movement a great success, eh?

Mrs. Deming. It is wonderful—wonderful. Your wife is a genius.

Mason. H'm!

(Buries himself in his paper.)

(Telephone rings. Mrs. Deming answers it. Mason looks up.)

Mrs. Deming. Hullo! No!

(Mason starts to go to it.)

It's *her* secretary.

(Mason sinks back disgusted.)

For Sunday's Supplement? How would you like it? Profile or three-quarter?

(Mason swears under breath.)

There's a new one with a large picture hat.

(Mason throws down paper, walks impatiently to window, looks out.)

No, I'm not laughing at you—go on.... Very well, then I'll send the one with the long coat.

Mason. (Returns.) Oh, Mrs. Deming—

(Telephone rings.)

Allow me!

(Takes up receiver.)

Hullo! What? Yes Mr. Mason's house. Yes—well?

(Smiles over at Mrs. Deming.)

Yes, yes, what's that? Say that again, please, Madame Poillon—oh, *corsets!*

(Drops receiver with disgusted expression, deep into his paper again.)

Mrs. Deming. (At the telephone.) Oh, very well, thank you—not later than Thursday.

(To Mason demurely.)

Wasn't what you were expecting, was it?

Mason. (Makes a grimace.) Well, I'll wait for it—that is— (Elaborately sarcastic.) if I am not in the way.

Mrs. Deming. Oh, not at all, if you wouldn't mind getting off that proof.

(Mason rises, seats himself in another chair, in a huff.)

(Butler enters with telegram. Mason takes it from him, mechanically begins to open it. Mrs. Deming glances at it.)

Mrs. Deming. M-r-s.—Mrs.

Mason. I beg your pardon. (Hands it to her.)

Mrs. Deming. (After reading it.) The Woman's Club of Seattle joins—that's the fifteenth Club.

Mason. (Reading from paper.) Ha! "Mother cheats her son out of \$2,000."

(Mrs. Deming looks at him and smiles, goes on with her work.)

(Telephone rings.)

Mrs. Deming. (Sweetly.) Would you like to answer it?

Mason. (Short.) No!

Mrs. Deming. (Smiles—takes up the receiver.) Hullo! Yes—a symposium on the new Solidarity of the Sex. A thousand words. Yes, go to press Monday. I'll see it is done.

Mason. (Reading from paper.) Ah, ha—I see the Beethoven Club is split in two by a charming row. "Former woman President sues present woman President for defamation of character."

Mrs. Deming. (Smiles, stops work and takes up another paper, reads from it.) "Arrested for deserting wife and children."

Mason. (Reading.) "Shop-lifting on the increase." "Woman Highwayman robs well known stock broker."

Mrs. Deming. (As before.) "Wife-beater—drunkenness—"

Mason. (As before.) "A woman owns the largest saloon in Oshkosh." Ha! Ha!

Mrs. Deming. (As before.) This is interesting! "Young bank clerk caught."

Mason. I was just going to read that. I see the poor fellow had been living beyond his means—usual story—extravagant woman.

Mrs. Mason. (Entering hurriedly, turns to a maid who follows her, not the maid who dressed her.) I tell you I cannot see you now. (Seeing her husband.) Why John! Home so early!

Mason. (Casting a laughing glance over at Mrs. Deming.) Expected an important message. Yes.

Mrs. Mason. We'll serve tea, shortly.

Mason. I'll come back for it. Mrs. Deming, if it should come, have them switch over to my den.

Mrs. Deming. Very well.

(Mason exits.)

Mrs. Mason. Mrs. Deming will you have ten copies of this struck off?

(Mrs. Deming rises and takes a ms. from her.)

(To the maid.)

I told you I could not see you now.

Maid. (Meekly.) I can wait, mum.

(Mrs. Mason shrugs her shoulders impatiently.)

Mrs. Mason. (To Mrs. Deming.) Can you make it out? Dashed it off, but I guess it will do.

Mrs. Deming. (Looking it over.) What's that?

(Points to a word.)

Mrs. Mason. (Looks over her shoulders.) That? That's "justice"—"fundamental justice." Can you read the next page? It's rather scratched.

Mrs. Deming. (Doubtfully.) Let me see—"If a woman works as—as—"

Mrs. Mason. "Hard."

Mrs. Deming. "Hard as a man—"

Mrs. Mason. "Why should she not receive the same wages?"

Mrs. Deming. "With her greater conscientiousness in small things"—What is this word?

Mrs. Mason. "Reliability"—r-e-l—you see?

Mrs. Deming. I guess I have it—this is "the injustice of paying more to a man because he is a man."

Mrs. Mason. (Notices maid.) I told you not to wait, Mary.

Mary. Yes, mum, but you've put me off so often and spring's coming.

Mrs. Mason. Spring? What's it all about?

Mary. (Defiantly.) I want \$30 mum,—

Mrs. Mason. Nonsense, \$25 is plenty—wages are getting more and work less all the time, I don't know what we are coming to.

Mary. But Perkins, mum, gets more'n double my pay and he don't do half the work I do.

Mrs. Mason. (Haughtily.) That is quite different. You don't know what you are talking about. I can get all the chambermaids I want for \$25 and I will not pay more than the market rates.

Mary. And here's me listening to you this very minute saying as how if a woman works as hard as a man, she ought—

Mrs. Mason. That is quite different—men servants always get more than women servants.

Mary. (Getting quite excited.) But I ask you is it right? Is it fair? I'm up long before Perkins gets down and I ain't through my work till long after he's done. I can do just the same things as him, only maybe I'm not the fashion. Because he's a man, he gets double wages. I don't see what right you have going around and telling the women folks they ought to be paid same as men, and then—

Mrs. Mason. (Severely.) That will do, Mary, you may go—

Mary. Oh, mum!

Mrs. Mason. When your month is up.

Mary. And me sending every dollar to my poor old mither in the old country!

(Exits in tears.)

Mrs. Mason. What a bore! (To Mrs. Deming.) Just 'phone Mrs. Peterson and say I positively insist on seeing the last employer—it's a perfect outrage, you can't trust a written reference now-a-days—you remember that fourteen year reference Mrs. Vanderhof gave the cook,—“perfectly sober,” and the second day she was under the kitchen table dead drunk.

Mrs. Deming. Was that Mrs. Vanderhof, President of the Boy's League?

Mrs. Mason. Yes, I must say she does splendid work in that.

Mrs. Deming. (Smiles.) The motto of which is “Truth before all things.”

Butler. (Entering.) Miss Lillian Ray, of the Evening Whirl.

(Enter Miss Ray—a maiden lady of about forty, very thin, hopelessly plain and awkward. Her face bears a set expression, her mouth is large and filled with irregular, projecting teeth. She wears glasses.)

Mrs. Mason. (Cordially.) How do you do, Miss Ray. So glad to see you. Will you wait just a moment? Sit down.

(To Mrs. Deming.)

I see you have the proof. Did you correct it?

Mrs. Deming. Yes.

Mrs. Mason. You saw, then, where I had added about the immorality of manufacturers refusing to consider the needs of their employees and hiding behind the market rate?

Mrs. Deming. Yes, I have fixed it.

(Remains quietly working.)

Mrs. Mason. Now, Miss Ray, I am all attention. What can I do for you?

Miss Ray. I came to interview you on the progress of this new movement of yours.

Mrs. Mason. Yes, the Association to free Sybil Fane?

Miss Ray. Do you realize, Mrs. Mason, how women from one end of the country to the other, are glorying in your courage!

Mrs. Mason. (Smiling.) Oh, I don't know that it took any special courage.

Miss Ray. Indeed it did, Mrs. Mason, ten years ago a woman in your position would not have dared stand up for a woman accused of murder.

Mrs. Mason. You think then, it was the right thing to do?

Miss Ray. The right thing? Why, there has been nothing like it. It has aroused all that is purest and finest in womanhood. It is a clarion

call to the men, to purify themselves, a notice served to the world that the new woman will no longer remain at the beck and call of man's pleasure. You know the Evening Whirl subscribed \$10,000 to the cause?

Mrs. Mason. Yes, it was perfectly splendid.

Miss Ray. It was just the kind of thing the old man loves to do. He's different from most men, he likes to see women forge ahead in their upward march. He isn't the sort that likes to keep women chained in Harems, the slaves of men's passions.

Mrs. Mason. Oh, come now—they are not all so bad—

Miss Ray. Not so bad, eh? —I wouldn't trust 'em. I know 'em. Much they can fool me. I tell you that Sybil Fane did just right. I've been practising with a pistol ever since. I'd just like to see a man offer base proposals to *me*—

(Mrs. Deming looks up amused.)

I'd just like to see a man try to kiss me.

(Mrs. Deming chokes, goes to window, pretending to have a coughing fit.)

(To Mrs. Mason.) (Looks after her in astonishment.) Is she often taken that way?

Mrs. Mason. (Murmurs something about a delicate throat, is amused at Miss Ray, but polite.) Pray go on!

Miss Ray. Well, my chief sent me particularly to find out what I could about this new opposition movement.

Mrs. Mason. (Astonished.) Opposition?

Miss Ray. You didn't know?

Mrs. Mason. Why no! What do you mean? Popular sentiment is entirely with us. Even the judge reprimanded the District Attorney for his language towards her—the papers too are with us.

Miss Ray. (Impressively.) Not all.

Mrs. Mason. What?

Miss Ray. No, there's a distinct opposition being skillfully aroused. Little innuendos about Sybil Fane's past—stories about young Mortimer's being such a fine fellow. Reminiscences of college chums—praise from his professors—

Mrs. Mason. (Thoughtfully.) H'm!

Miss Ray. I'm surprised you didn't see it.

Mrs. Mason. We've been so busy organizing—

Miss Ray. There's some powerful backing somewhere. Clifford Beale of Beale & Strong's been en-

gaged as special counsel to assist the District Attorney.

Mrs. Mason. You don't say! Well, this is interesting!

(Mrs. Sampson-Black enters breathless.)

(She is over-dressed—in fineries that are most unbecoming—her serious, fat face looks utterly comical in frivolous fashions.)

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Didn't wait to be announced—just a moment! Have you heard?

Mrs. Mason. (Grimly.) Just hearing.

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Just come from the wedding—

(With great satisfaction.)

They put me in the front pew—walked up the aisle with young Hitchcock-Jones—Why weren't you there?

Mrs. Mason. (Drily.) Too busy!

Mrs. Sampson-Black. (Complacently.) Wouldn't have missed it for the world—the Bishop looked too sweet,—and those Brinsley girls—did you ever—

(Would launch into a description of gowns but Mrs. Mason interrupts.)

Mrs. Mason. You called, Mrs. Black?

Mrs. Sampson-Black. (Coming to herself.) Yes—

(Holding out a clipping.)

I brought you this, just read it! Did you ever?

Mrs. Mason. (In surprise.) The Chronicle?

Miss Ray. Yes, an editorial against us—red hot too.

Mrs. Mason. (Reading.) “Nothing but an ordinary, low adventuress, unscrupulously taking advantage of the present hysteria to serve her own purpose.”

(Reads along from there.)

H'm—“Time this blatant, better-than-thou attitude of the leaders of the woman’s movement should receive a set back.” “Like all privileged classes they seek to hide the true state of affairs by clamoring for Justice!”

Miss Ray. They say the editorial policy of the Chronicle is dictated by one of the big Wall Street guns.

Mrs. Mason. My husband will know. I’ll ask him. (To Mrs. Sampson-Black.) Couldn’t be that cat, Mrs. Parker-Gordon?

Mrs. Sampson-Black. (Jumps, then reconsiders.) No! she’d never dare take a man’s part against a woman. If it were found out!

Mrs. Mason. That’s so!

Miss Ray. It may be the work of that young Mortimer's mother, you know—she's working awful hard, she may have some pull—they say her husband was President of a bank or something out in Des Moines, Iowa.

Mrs. Mason. Des Moines, you say?

Miss Ray. Your husband came from Des Moines, didn't he, Mrs. Mason?

Mrs. Mason. Left there as a young man over twenty years ago, but perhaps he may know who this Mrs. Mortimer is.

Mrs. Sampson-Black. Of course, I can understand the poor mother trying her best, but that anyone else could want to punish this poor beautiful Sybil Fane—**(Sentimentally.)** on trial for her life—think of it! And not a helping hand stretched out to save her till this Association was conceived—so nobly—by our brave President—

(Would ramble on indefinitely but Mrs. Mason cuts her off with crisp, decisive tone.)

Mrs. Mason. We must find out what is behind this. Now, Miss Ray, I think I can do nothing until I see Mr. Mason. He will help me. My motor is at the door, let Mrs. Black drop you at the office—I am so much obliged, it was so good of you to come and tell us.

(Miss Ray and Mrs. Sampson-Black take their leave.)

(Mrs. Mason looks undecided for a moment, sees Mrs. Deming's head bent discouraged over her work.)

Mrs. Mason. (One hand on Mrs. Deming's shoulder.) So downcast? It isn't so bad as all that.

Mrs. Deming. (Looking up and seizing Mrs. Mason's hand.) Are you sure you are right?

Mrs. Mason. (Taken aback.) Why, what's the matter, what do you mean?

Mrs. Deming. You won't mind if I speak out? You won't be annoyed?

Mrs. Mason. Why, go on!

Mrs. Deming. Are you sure this woman is what you think?

Mrs. Mason. (Startled.) What do you mean? Why do you say that?

Mrs. Deming. Did she really do it in self-defense? Is she a wronged, innocent woman?

Mrs. Mason. (Anxiously.) Why shouldn't she be? We never used to give a woman the benefit of the doubt. We always looked upon an accused woman as a guilty woman. Now, thank God, we give her a chance. We are not so ready as we used to be, to forgive nothing in the woman, everything in the man.

Mrs. Deming. But hasn't the pendulum swung too far the other way? If in the past we were too ready to believe the worst of a woman, aren't we today too ready to believe the worst of a man? Do you ever ask yourself—suppose she really shot down young Mortimer in cold blood—that she is an unscrupulous murderess—

Mrs. Mason. But why? For what possible motive? There was no robbery.

Mrs. Deming. (Coming close to her.) I am going to tell you what I have never told a soul.

Mrs. Mason. Why, what do you mean?

Mrs. Deming. (Trying to compose herself.) You know my horrible story.

Mrs. Mason. (Coldly.) That your husband shot himself just before you divorced him—the best thing he could have done.

Mrs. Deming. No, no, you don't say that from your warm heart—you say that as the clubwoman mechanically repeating what you've heard. I was that once—I used to sit at their feet and listen to their harangues about not being slaves to men and all that, and—oh, well, what's the use of going into it! I was the typical club woman, thoroughly inoculated with the virus of Individualism and Ego-tism—and I tell you a little forgiveness, a little old-

fashioned womanly forgiveness and my husband would be alive today, my boy would not have been fatherless and practically motherless.

(Sits down, buries face in hands.)

Mrs. Mason. My dear woman, what is the good of going into all that? Of course, a woman suffers in being firm, but anything is better than the old way of suffering in silence—forgive the man anything because he's man—we all know what that led to!

Mrs. Deming. Oh, but you don't know—I never told how wrong I was—

Mrs. Mason. (In astonishment.) You?

(Mrs. Deming nods her head.)

You! Why he never denied it.

Mrs. Deming. (Sadly.) No! He told me everything.

Mrs. Mason. Well?

Mrs. Deming. He counted on my forgiveness, on my love being strong enough to overlook one misstep.

(Mrs. Mason makes an impatient movement.)

Yes, he was telling the truth. Oh, how can I ever tell you? —He pleaded with me, he loved his boy, he couldn't bear to be separated from him, you

needn't shake your head—he loved his boy I tell you—his baby boy! Sometimes I think you club-women are unwilling to admit there is such a thing as father-love. It's always mother-love with you, as if fathers don't make sacrifices for their children. You paint the picture always with the poor tired-out mother wearily darning socks while the father blissfully consorts with his chums at the corner grocery, or the mother rocking the cradle while the father drinks at the bar. You never think of the father bent over his desk in a stuffy dark hole in some warehouse or office, while the mother gads about the stores and the theatres, dressed in fineries paid for by her underfed children—don't tell me! Why, I!—I!—with all my sins on my head am looked on as an injured saint and my husband a violent brute.

Mrs. Mason. Well, why not?

Mrs. Deming. (Excited.) Why not? Why, he resisted that woman for months before he succumbed. Yes, that's right! Laugh! Laugh!—as I did. I called him a cad—I taunted him with being a cad besides a villain. I prated of Honor and Virtue and Faithfulness. Oh, yes! I was to perfection the noble, indignant, better-than-thou woman. I refused to believe that a woman ever makes love to a man, ever is the tempter. I said something about Adam as usual, hiding behind Eve. And it was all true, true, every word he spoke—true!

(Mrs. Mason makes a gesture of horror.)

Mrs. Deming. (Trying to control herself.) After he shot himself, I came across some letters, she was wild about him, crazy! God! it seemed as if the paper would shrivel up with the mad, hot passion as I read. Her husband was one of these little dried up, bloodless creatures,—my husband was a big strapping fellow over six feet—well, I was away—sonny had run slight temperatures and I took him to the mountains. I left my husband in town—in that Godless way only we American wives have—he telegraphed for me once, and I thought sonny needed me more. Now do you understand?

(Mrs. Mason makes a sound of distress and sympathy.)

And now I can't get this poor murdered boy out of my head. Suppose this Sybil Fane should be another like that devil who ruined my husband? I begin to think there are more of them in the world than you and I dream of. What right have you to believe her story more than the poor mother's? He may have resisted her, he may have wanted to have nothing to do with her, and she may have shot him from pure jealousy.

(Mrs. Mason looks startled.)

Don't you know, or *won't* you know there are good men in the world, and there are bad women?

Mrs. Mason. (Soothingly.) Your own sad experience has warped your judgment. Your story is exceptional. Yes, it is, don't shake your head.

You know how we women used to throw stones, how we used to gather our skirts together and pass such a woman by. Today there is a worldwide significance in the fact that we stretch out a helping hand. It is more likely that this Mortimer was one of those degenerate sons of a millionaire, and his family are fighting exposure. This poor girl may stand more than ever in need of me. I shall discover what is behind this counter movement—it may be that the men are banding together because we women do. I cannot tell, but the very opposition convinces me more than ever that I am right.

(Enter Butler with tea.)

(Mrs. Deming leaves—trying to hide her emotion.)

Mrs. Mason. Tell Mr. Mason tea is served. He is in the den.

Butler. Very good, ma'am.

(Arranges tea table—exit.)

Mason. (Entering.) What! Alone!

(Pretends to look about room.)

No one interviewing you?

(Mrs. Mason laughs and shakes her head.)

No hidden reporters, or secretaries?

(Pretends to look behind sofa and under desk.)

Then you're expecting a committee?

Mrs. Mason. No, not one!

(Mrs. Mason makes tea as she talks—
husband seated opposite her.)

Mason. (Glancing at her as she is about to make the tea.) I don't suppose I dare!

Mrs. Mason. Dare what?

Mason. Ask a woman to take off her hat—a becoming hat?

(Mrs. Mason smiles, rises, begins to take out her hatpins before mirror.)

Looks more as if you might remain a while. Have you any license for that?

Mrs. Mason. License?

(Holding up a long pin as she speaks.)

Mason. We men need special licenses to carry weapons.

Mrs. Mason. (Smiles, seats herself opposite him and makes and serves tea during the conversation.) This is really so nice you got off early—some Director must have died or something—how did you ever do it?

Mason. (Munching toast and smiling.) I told you I had something of importance on, I preferred to put through here.

Mrs. Mason. Um—mysterious! Awful good looking suit of clothes! That new London tailor you're trying?

Mason. Now, if you weren't the new woman, I'd say you wanted something.

Mrs. Mason. I do!

Mason. Ha! The more I see of new women the more I see they are not so very new! Overdrawn account?

Mrs. Mason. No, though I may need some more.

Mason. Home for babies needs a new ward?

Mrs. Mason. No!

Mason. The Magdalen Home—

Mrs. Mason. Never more flourishing.

Mason. Then I give it up!

Mrs. Mason. I want your help.

Mason. That's interesting—you don't honor me often that way I must admit.

Mrs. Mason. Who is Clifford Beale?

Mason. (Just about to take his tea, lays down his cup, startled.) Why—what?

Mrs. Mason. Who is Clifford Beale?

Mason. Who is he? Why, a lawyer,—(Recovering himself.) very nice chap, member of the Century

Club and the University—you've met him, haven't you?

Mrs. Mason. No, but I mean, would you consider him a very great lawyer?

Mason. (Annoyed, but tries to carry it off lightly.) Leader of the bar. Tells awful good stories—he told me one yesterday at lunch—sat down together—

Mrs. Mason. (Determined not to be put off.) Whom would you consider next to him?

Mason. No one.

Mrs. Mason. Well, if he was against you—

Mason. I'd see that he wasn't.

Mrs. Mason. But if he was, what would you do?

Mason. Give up.

Mrs. Mason. Nonsense! Tell me who you think could put up the best fight against him?

Mason. What's it all about?

Mrs. Mason. I've just heard that he's been engaged as special counsel to the District Attorney in the Sybil Fane trial.

Mason. Oh, get out of that, it's nonsense giving your time to that.

Mrs. Mason. (With dignity.) That's the second time you've asked me. You know it's impossible.

Mason. Why impossible? (*Sardonically.*) Say your children need you just now—and you can't give the time to it.

Mrs. Mason. I look upon this as one of the most important things I have ever undertaken—and it is sure to land me as President of the National Federated Clubs—you know what that means.

Mason. (*Rising impatiently.*) Oh, be President of anything that amuses you—but please draw the line at championing murderesses.

Mrs. Mason. There you go, assuming her guilt—but if she is innocent, think how splendid to have saved her.

Mason. Fiddlesticks! What business has a decent woman in a man's room that time of night?

Mrs. Mason. A ruse—a sick friend, as she said, easy enough for a scoundrel of a man to lure a woman who is actuated by the highest motives.

Mason. She'll make you believe anything. Well, thank goodness she won't find Clifford Beale so easy!

Mrs. Mason. (*Wonderingly.*) "Thank goodness!" Why you seem to care personally, you—

Mason. (*Quickly.*) I hate to see my wife dragged into this dirty mess.

Mrs. Mason. (*Smiling, trying to take it lightly.*) Oh, you know I am going to win. Confess you

think things are going my way. At least you must admit the trial is so far.

Mason. The trial by newspaper is certainly going your way.

Mrs. Mason. That is something.

Mason. Not at all—that is to be expected.

Mrs. Mason. Expected?

Mason. Certainly. The papers are edited for the women.

Mrs. Mason. That is interesting. I never heard that. How do you make it out?

Mason. It began with a woman's column, then came a woman's page, then it spread itself over the whole paper—now even the editorials are written with an eye to the women.

Mrs. Mason. You astonish me. Don't men read the papers?

Mason. Oh! The financial reports, sporting news, legal notices, some politics—the rest—the murders, the divorce trials—the description of gowns at the opera, of society abroad—it's all done for the women.

Mrs. Mason. And the advertisements?

Mason. Precisely. What would there be to advertise if you take away the shops? You know man, mere man—isn't a shopping animal. A sad day for the papers when they are reduced to advertising

neckties and golfsticks. Look here—you women are always saying you are needed to purify politics—have you purified anything you've got into? Look at the personalities, the sensationalism, you complain of in the papers. Who is it done for? The women. Who read it? The women. You complain of the vulgarity of the stage;—who buy the tickets and choose the shows they take their husbands to? The women. Of course, it pays to give a big price to the divine Ella to write those touching editorials about Sybil the beautiful victim, or of the girl angel with the trailing wings. Humph! Do you think that sort of stuff goes down for an instant with us men? No! We men know life too well. We've met your Sybil Fanes in the raw—

Mrs. Mason. It is true then! I have always heard that a woman may do anything with impunity until she touches the Social Evil,—the moment she tries to make the world a better place, it is "Hands Off!" She must not interfere with man's pleasure!

Mason. (Disgusted.) You! You repeat that cant? Do you really believe decent men wouldn't be as glad as you to make things better?

Mrs. Mason. We can't make them better because the legislators are all men.

Mason. And do you pretend to believe for a moment that the kind of womanly woman who would be a legislator would be any better?

Mrs. Mason. A woman is always actuated by higher motives.

Mason. Look here! The trouble with you women is that you divide the world into men and women instead of into decent and indecent. There are in this world, forces of good and forces of evil; among both of these we will find men and women. That is the danger of the whole so-called "Woman's Movement." You think all women inherently good—all men inherently bad, and you're making about the worst mistake it is possible to make. You even go so far as to claim the vote of the prostitutes will make for good government.

Mrs. Mason. (Eagerly.) There will be no white slaves when women vote—

Mason. (Interrupting.) Why should a woman who has sold her body refuse to sell her vote?

(Mrs. Mason starts—Butler enters with letter on tray which he hands to Mr. Mason.)

Butler. From Beale & Strong, sir. Mr. Beale particularly wants to know if there is any answer, sir.

(Mrs. Mason listens, surprised. Mason tears open letter eagerly, dropping envelope on floor.)

Mason. (Reading letter.) I'll see—

(Reads some more.) Where is the messenger?

Butler. Downstairs, sir.

(Mason quickly leaves followed by the Butler. Mrs. Mason stands still, thinking, crosses to envelope, picks it up, reads name—the following is said haltingly as she seats herself and ponders it over.)

Mrs. Mason. How strange! John! Impossible! —working against me—in the dark—No! No! It can't be—merely a coincidence— (Springing up.) but his manner just now,—his evident excitement—what can it be?

(Mason enters.)

(Mrs. Mason looks at him, fixedly.)

Mrs. Mason. (Under her breath.) You?

(Mason nods.)

But why? Why? I can't understand.

Mason. I begged you to give it up.

Mrs. Mason. But you gave me no hint that you would fight against me—why this secrecy?

Mason. Having failed in inducing you to withdraw, I thought I owed it to you at least to keep in the background.

Mrs. Mason. (Ironically.) That was very considerate. I shall be the laughing stock of—

Mason. No, you forget our compact.

Mrs. Mason. Our compact?

Mason. Yes—you forget I promised never to differ in public.

Mrs. Mason. (Breathing a sigh of relief.) No one knows?

Mason. Mr. Beale, and the District Attorney, one or two others.

Mrs. Mason. (Relieved.) Ah! —but I can't understand—why should you be mixed in it?

(Suddenly.) No, it can't be!

Mason. What?

Mrs. Mason. (In great excitement.) You don't know this woman? She isn't—she wasn't—

Mason. (Amused.) Pray go on. Considering that you regard her as an innocent, wronged woman, I don't see why my knowing her should upset you so. Where is all the beautiful womanly faith?

Mrs. Mason. It is all so sudden—I—

(Goes to him and puts her hands on his shoulders.)

Tell me, John, please tell me. If there's a good reason, maybe I'll see you are right after all.

Mason. (Smiling down at her, kisses her hand.) Well, it isn't what you think. You needn't worry. I never laid eyes on the woman in my life.

Mrs. Mason. (Puzzled.) Well, something mighty important made you do it. You have never before interfered with a thing I did.

Mason. (Takes her on his knee and begins half playfully, then becomes serious.) Well, suppose we put it down to my sense of justice—to a man's love of fair play, if you will, my dear. You women don't understand; you think a man doesn't mind what's said of him. But he does. This young fellow has his rights too,—all the more because his lips are closed in death. You women seem to think it is nothing that his name is defiled, his life disgraced. This Fane woman accused him of the vilest crime a man is capable of, to wrong a woman deliberately, against her will, to ruin a woman's life for a moment's pleasure. No it isn't right, you women look on life—on men—from a wrong point of view—you begin with the false postulate that all men are naturally vicious and that no women are—besides even if that poor murdered boy doesn't interest you, doesn't win your pity, I should think at least you'd pity the mother. The poor mother, half crazed with grief—for her only child—why, she's a woman too!

(He stares at her face and exclaims.)

What's the matter?

(As she struggles to rise, he holds her.)

No, I won't let you go till you tell me what's in your little head now?

Mrs. Mason. (Panting.) Let me go!

(She breaks away and confronts him. He also rises.)

His mother! *His Mother!* Of course! I see it all now!

Mason. Now, I demand to know what you mean!

Mrs. Mason. Fool! Fool! I see it all—she said “Des Moines, Iowa”—Oh! You needn't stand there so dignified—don't you remember you told me all about it—when we were engaged—the only other woman you were in love with?

Mason. Well!

Mrs. Mason. How you were tempted, she a married woman—that woman was Mrs. Mortimer. Why don't you deny it?

Mason. I deny nothing. You are acting foolishly. I do know Mrs. Mortimer; we are old friends, though I haven't seen her for over twenty years. She asked me to help save the good name of her boy—for he was only a boy. I have known how wrong you are, and have hoped you would be convinced in time. Sybil Fane is playing a game for her life—

she is not innocent, but foully guilty—she shot young Mortimer because she was crazy about him and he refused to have anything to do with her.

Mrs. Mason. Ha! How do you know that?

Mason. He did not lie to his mother.

Mrs. Mason. Ha! “his mother,”—“his mother”—always his mother. She told you that—you’ve seen her, she came and asked you to help her.

Mason. She did!

Mrs. Mason. Strange kind of woman would ask a man to help her against his own wife.

Mason. You forget you had nothing to lose, she had everything.

Mrs. Mason. So, because she asks you, you throw yourself into it, heart and soul—you, already up to your ears in work, plunge into this, help the District Attorney, engage special counsel, have editorials written, make up your mind to win—because she asks you—as if you aren’t asked twenty times a day to do things you refuse! She must have been pretty sure of you.

Mason No!

Mrs. Mason. (Beside herself.) Yes, I say!—sure you would take her part against your wife. *She* asked you! What do you care for *my* feelings, *my* pride? What do you care how I am trampled upon

—wounded. Oh! Oh! *She* must be pleased, *she* must be made happy at all costs. You place her above me—you love her!

Mason. Stop!

Mrs. Mason. You have always loved her—no doubt you married me only from pique—I have always been second in your eyes—it's always that way—you are just like them all.

Mason. Cora! Control yourself! You are talking wildly. You say yourself I told you everything—you know, then, she was innocent.

Mrs. Mason. Bah!

Mason. Beyond one wild kiss we never went.

Mrs. Mason. I give that (**Snapping her fingers.**) for your trying to shield her. The mere instinct of the male. I tell you she was your mistress.

Mason. (**Shocked.**) Cora!

Mrs. Mason. You are actuated by a spirit of fair play, aren't you—

(**Pauses, stares at him wildly.**)

My God!

(**Mason looks at her horrified, as if reading her thoughts.**)

(**Hysterically.**) You "seeking justice!" No, it is not justice!

Mason. You are beside yourself!

Mrs. Mason. You are not seeking justice, you are seeking vengeance!

Mason. Vengeance!

Mrs. Mason. (Deliberately.) Vengeance for the murder of your son!

(She falls sobbing on sofa—he makes an indignant exclamation. Paces room—looks at her—goes to her, but does not speak. Continues pacing up and down. Her sobs continue. At last he bends over her.)

Mason. Come, Cora, this is preposterous. You are over-excited, and nervous under this strain. You don't know what you are saying.

(Mrs. Mason waves him aside petulantly.)

It is easy enough to prove that I could not have been that poor boy's father. I was in Europe a full eighteen months before he was born. But what right have I ever given you to think me an unspeakable cad?

Mrs. Mason. (Looking up amazed.) Why, whatever do you mean?

Mason. How could that murdered boy be my son—unless I had betrayed my best friend, dishonored his wife, and proven myself a scoundrel.

(After a pause, seeing his wife abashed.)

We men are not saints, but I'd hate to be the kind of creatures you "good women" think us. You accuse me of having illicit relations with the wife of my best friend and yet you are totally unconscious of insulting me.

Mrs. Mason. (Sitting up.) Forgive me! I was wrong.

Mason. (Angrily.) You women always are wrong when you judge men—we are sorry enough devils in your eyes—and yet you tolerate us. You assail, you revile us—but you marry us! Do you think there would be so many rakes if they didn't always find you ready to give them your daughters! You say we men have low standards—on the contrary it is you women who hold us to none. You countenance low men, we refuse to countenance low women. We hold you to the highest ideal of chastity. And what do you women hold us to? Nothing! What do you demand of us? Worldly success—that is all—and you know it. If we attain that, you are willing to overlook everything else.

Mrs. Mason. Oh, no!

Mason. What! Do you dare deny that the average "good mother" will snub the most moral youth in the world if he is poor, and encourage the dissolute scamp if he is rich or titled? Yet we men hear on every side of *our* commercial standards, *our* materialism! I don't think it's the fathers who at-

tempt to gain social position by trafficking in their daughters. I tell you—you “good women” who are supposed to be our inspiration, fail miserably when it comes to inspiring us with high standards. It isn’t easy—but it is possible for a man to hold the sex instinct as a sacred trust—for the future of the race—what help, what encouragement do you women give us? I won’t speak of the kind of appeal you make to us—let that go—the audacious freedom in dress, the painting and the powdering, the appeal to the lowest in us, but, take the serious women, the women to whom we have a right to look for inspiration—your leaders in the woman’s movements—do we see **you** holding yourself as a sacred trust for the future of the race? Do we see you approach maternity with any sense of consecration? We hear a lot about the vote of the mother and what she will accomplish when her influence is felt—but how about the nervous babies brought into the world just because the women won’t dedicate themselves to the great call of maternity—won’t relinquish their silly little routine of pleasure? How many women do you know who really conserve their strength and vitality as they should, who regard their motherhood solemnly with high thoughts and uplifted joy! I’m not talking of the poor women, mind you—to whom every child is a serious drain, but to the well-to-do women whose husbands want to be fathers—can we get you to nurse your own babies, or when we do, God knows you take enough

credit to yourself, as if you were doing something exceptional, something wonderful, instead of just following the dictates of Nature, but even when we do get you to nurse your babies, do you really give yourself up to it?—or do you fly about just the same as ever—holding your babe in your arms with hat on and motor at the door waiting to whirl you to the next engagement?

(Waving memoranda before her.)

I tell you we men are growing just a little tired of hearing of the nobility and saintliness of woman. I wish the poetic muse of Yellow Journalism and the Suffragettes who are so enraptured with their sex could only cast their eyes over these charming records of their sainted sisters. I think your ideas of the woman always being “the pure white dove, seized in the maw of the vulture man” would receive a considerable jolt.

Mrs. Mason. What have you there? What is it?

Mason. It is some data I have just received from the detectives. You know the defense! She hopes to save her life by pretending to have been a pure woman till he forced her.

Mrs. Mason. Well, you heard Dr. Gregorius explain the nature of the shock and the kind of dementia apt to follow.

Mason. Clever idea that! To get a woman specialist. We corralled all the nerve specialists we

could, but we never thought of those gynecologist fellows.

(Mrs. Mason smiles.)

However you must admit that all that scientific rigmarole about shock and dementia, and hysteria, etc., when she had lost her virtue, falls to pieces if we can prove she had no virtue to lose.

Mrs. Mason. (Uneasily.) What do you mean?

Mason. Simple enough! She claims to be a pure woman who shot down her betrayer.

Mrs. Mason. (Nervous.) Ye-yes?

Mason. If we can convince the jury that she had a career, a lurid one—before she ever met young Mortimer, I think it is obvious that she was not defending her honor.

Mrs. Mason. Well?

Mason. Well, in that case it's capital punishment for her, nothing less.

Mrs. Mason. (Anxiously.) But that—

(Touching the package of papers.)

what is that?

Mason. Here are the careers of the most notorious adventuresses of the country. We are ransacking the criminal records with a fine tooth comb. We are bound to identify her sooner or later.

(Mrs. Mason grows increasingly nervous
as Mason continues.)

And that's what I mean about the surprise in store for Equality Leagues—a nice little Sunday School story—Equality? Well, I guess there's equality all right. It is customary for all of you Club-women to look upon all fallen women as victims of man's deviltry. But the beauty of the real thing like this is that it shows up the woman as she is nine times out of ten—deliberately choosing the way that will give her dress and luxury. It's greed—just plain greed—the greed you women love to cry out against in us men. Ha! I do love to hear the women hold forth on man's worship of money, man's materialism and the need of woman's uplift. Humph! Here's one beauty—

(Pats one sheet.)

Oh, a gem! Been supported by various sports, sucks 'em dry, turns 'em down—even steals from them but under such circumstances that the victim prefers not to squeal. Here's another—

(Waves a paper.)

A good deal like this Fane woman—her eye peeled for the young boys—hangs about college towns—but this—

(Waves another.)

Here is the life history of the coolest proposition you've ever heard of—murder, trials for bigamy, cheating at cards, any old thing, clever, beautiful and could make anyone think her a regular "angel child." I tell you this Inez Temple takes the cake.

Mrs. Mason. Inez Temple—no, no, no! Impossible!

Mason. (Noticing her excitement.) What do you mean? What do you know—about Inez Temple?

Mrs. Mason. Nothing, nothing—I thought you mentioned another name—I—

Mason. (Curiously looking at paper.) In many ways this Inez Temple resembles Sybil Fane. If I could only identify them, the defense falls to pieces. She wouldn't have a leg to stand on.

Mrs. Mason. But you can't—it's impossible—Inez Temple is dead.

Mason. How do you know that? What on earth do you know about Inez Temple? What can my wife and Inez Temple have in common?

Mrs. Mason. (Trying to appear unconcerned.) Why I remember reading something or other about Inez Temple drowning herself, flinging herself into a river—out west.

Mason. (Studying a paper.) Yes—that is right. But this happened five years ago. How does it

come you remembered an event like that five years? The name and all—I don't understand.

Mrs. Mason. (*Very nervous.*) I don't see anything very wonderful in my remembering what I read in the papers.

Mason. A common criminal like this—yes. I think it very strange. And five years!

Mrs. Mason. (*Hesitating.*) Inez Temple was one of the girls of the Magdalen Home when I was President.

Mason. Oh! (*After a pause—suddenly.*) Then why didn't you say so at once!

Mrs. Mason. (*Laughing nervously.*) You are the most amusing man—why make a mountain out of a molehill? Suppose I didn't think of it, what then?

Mason. (*Reflecting.*) You are very nervous, my dear. There is something behind this.

(*Looking sharply at the paper, then as if to himself.*)

I wish I had a description of this Inez Temple.

(*To his wife.*)

Do you remember her, could you describe her?

Mrs. Mason. (*Eagerly.*) Isn't there a description there?

Mason. (*Drily.*) I said, "I wish I had it!"

Mrs. Mason. (Relieved.) Oh! Why she was very short, remarkably short—quite a dwarf, plump—

(Seeing her husband's surprise, adds quickly.)

but she was very fascinating—very. Light blonde hair and blue eyes. A little pug nose—

Mason. (Sternly.) Cora, you are making this up. Why, the Lord only knows!

Mrs. Mason. (Taken aback.) What do you mean?

Mason. Inez Temple was strikingly tall, thin, dark.

Mrs. Mason. You know?

Mason. (Drily.) I fear I overlooked the description after all. By Jove!

(Looking at it.)

Mrs. Mason. (Startled.) What is it?

Mason. (Fiercely.) What are you keeping back from me?

Mrs. Mason. What do you mean?

Mason. What are you keeping back from me?

Mrs. Mason. Nothing.

Mason. Nothing? From the moment I mentioned the name of Inez Temple you show uneasiness—then you pretend you never heard the name. Then you are forced to admit you know the woman. You show you are familiar with her career—then you

pretend to describe her and give a description totally false in every detail. Why? For what possible motive? There can be but one—this Sybil Fane, for all her pose of innocence, is none other but the notorious criminal who on the point of being taken in by the police pretended to drown herself—Inez Temple and Sybil are one and the same!

Mrs. Mason. (Startled, but trying to hide it.) Nonsense!

Mason. (Sternly.) Do you think there are so many women going around the world with false left eyes?

(Mrs. Mason overwhelmed.)

(Scornfully.) And still you remain at the head of this movement to free her. You are still President of the Fane and Freedom Association.

Mrs. Mason. Why should I not be?

Mason. What! You know that this murderess has been accused of murder before, has been an adventuress of the lowest type and yet you believe her story of being the wronged innocent victim?

Mrs. Mason. How should I know she was Inez Temple? You know she has systematically refused to see me.

Mason. And you had no reason for lying? Lying when you said you didn't know the name, lying

again when you pretended to describe her to me? Besides you seem to forget that yesterday, as she lifted her veil to be sworn in court you fainted dead away.

(Mrs. Mason nearly collapsed—has nothing to say.)

Mason. At the time I thought it was from excitement and overwork.

(Silence.)

(Bitterly.) No, you like to be known from one end of the country to the other as the rescuer of fallen women, the protector of woman's honor. You want to become President of the Federation of Clubs—what do you care for the truth!

Mrs. Mason. No, no—it was not that! When I began I thought she was really innocent.

Mason. Well, but after,—after—when you discovered the truth. You had not the character to admit to the world the kind of woman you had made a heroine of. It would be too much a blow to your slogan, "man-the-vulture, woman the prey." Don't I know! If that is not the reason, why did you hide the truth after you had found it out? I can excuse all the rest of it—I can't blame you entirely I should have to indict an entire sex—but a lie I can never forgive. Why did you lie to me?

(Mrs. Mason attempts to answer, but he runs on.)

No you still hoped to win, whether rightly or wrongly. You wanted success. What did you care if you let a murderess go free? What did you care for the poor mother's agony for her murdered boy? Your overweening ambition would not accept defeat.

Mrs. Mason. I must speak—I—

Mason. (Scornfully.) No! I will not listen. You may fool the others, but you can no longer fool me. I shall say nothing. I shall not hold you up to the scorn that you deserve—for you are my wife—you need not worry. You may continue to pose as the leader of this wonderful woman's movement that is going to lift up us men and purify politics, but your husband looks upon you yourself as no whit better than the lowest, most unscrupulous politician who stops at nothing to gain his end.

Mrs. Mason. No, no—I will not bear this. You must hear me, you shall hear me.

(Mason starts to leave. Mrs. Mason stands against door. Mason lights a cigar pretends not to listen at first.)

It is hard to tell you—I never thought I could bring myself to, but since you can think this of me—that I care only for success—that I am a low politician. I will tell you all—all—

(Mason smiles cynically.)

(Mrs. Mason feels about for words—then bursts out.)

I—your wife—was responsible for the career of Inez Temple.

Mason. (Gazes at her amazed.) You!

Mrs. Mason. I—I refused to give her her chance. I am as responsible for her career as that first man who wronged her.

Mason. Impossible!

Mrs. Mason. Sixteen years ago she entered the Magdalen Home a probationer. On one offence a girl is given a trial, on a second she must go. We feel that a first offence is often ignorance, a second means a pervert and we treat her so.

Mason. Well.

Mrs. Mason. The girl was peculiarly beautiful—and strange to say at that time peculiarly pure-minded. The first time had been a case of force—just that. She became a mother, but she was an unawakened child. Then she fell in love. When she was found out, she pleaded that she did not know the wretch was married, and swore she would have nothing more to do with him, although she admitted she adored him. No longer was she unawakened. I refused to believe her. She kept crying out that she wasn't really bad—only unfortunate. But I was

obdurate. Oh! how that child begged and implored to be given one more chance. She wanted to be honest. She had a horror of becoming bad. How she cried! She followed me about the room on her knees! I shall never forget it. But I pulled my skirts about me, called her shameless, and let her go forth pretty as she was, to the inevitable end.

(A pause)

Then John, I met you—and—and I understood. All the tragedy of us women's lot, our faith, our trust. Love opened my eyes, John, my love for you.—Love showed me how cruel I had been. Love—my love for you—taught me that a woman who loves is not bad. I knew John, in my innermost heart I knew, that had you been different I would have yielded. I adored you—you were my world, my God. Had you been married a thousand times I would have gone with you to the end of the earth. Ah! you men understand only the desire to possess. You can't understand the longing to be possessed—to belong to another! I was yours, yours, body and soul—yours! Can you understand how I suffered when I realized that I had abandoned that girl for the very sin I would have committed gladly, exultingly had you asked it? What right had I to lord it over her, to hold up my head and accept honors while she—that girl I had pushed down into the depths—she remained an outcast, a nameless thing? Why she was even stronger than I, for she loved

and was willing to renounce—but I? I should not have given you up—

(Mason is deeply stirred. He comes near her.)

I tried to make up for my mistake. I advertised; I did all I could. But it was too late. I had been given my chance and I wasn't big enough to seize it. When she began to be talked of, I followed her career feverishly, to the very end—or what I thought was the end. All the time—no matter what crime she committed—I said to myself "there might I have been, but for the fact that I happened to fall in love with an honorable, upright gentleman."

Mason. My poor girl!

Mrs. Mason. When I recognized her in the Court room that day, as soon as I had recovered from my swoon, I wanted to cry out that she was an impostor, that she was no innocent woman but a notorious criminal—but something kept me silent. A voice whispered to me here at last was my chance given to me again—here at last I could atone, that it had been miraculously given me to save her from a shameful end.

Mason. (Going to her.) Forgive me! Cora!

Mrs. Mason. One moment, let me say first all that is in my heart—you have convicted me of many short-comings. I admit them. Yet you might have told me, you might have stopped me. You smiled

and teased and seemed pleased enough at my success—but it was not fair to me, John. Now that I see how you felt, I say you should have asserted yourself. You were my husband and you had no right to put up with my behavior if you did not approve of it. You American men are too chivalrous, too tolerant. I see now that I was wrong—but you should have told me long ago. I think for a long time there has been growing slowly within me a feeling of dissatisfaction—that the important things of life were somehow slipping by—I listened to the ranting of restless women that it was finer to love all Humanity than just one's own—grander to go out and right the wrongs of strangers than to see there are no wrongs at home—broader to care for the waifs of the street than to devote myself to my own children. But you say you do not hold me entirely responsible, for you would have to indict a whole sex. But which sex? Are you so sure? Granted we women have followed false gods. But you were once our gods and you deserted us. In your place other images have been set up, but has it been entirely the fault of us women? If you men remained the master do you think we would be looking to women to fill our lives? Why a moment ago you were scolding me, ridiculing me, flaying me with your contempt, and yet I have never loved you more—you have never held me more. No, you should not have kept your peace. We women should be mastered, we want to be mastered—we adore our

masters. It's when you let the reins slip through your fingers, we seize them. Where we women used to look to you men for praise, for flattery, we now look to women, where we used to think life empty without some man looming large, we now fill it with great gatherings of women, with the game of politics, with club life and public movements. We women have tasted a new flavor—that of moving others, not as of old by physical charm alone, by dress or other allurements, but by power, by magnetism, the thrill of the intellect. It is dangerous, for it is very new and very wonderful, this moving great numbers, of swaying crowds. It may be that never again will women go to men for their biggest emotions.

Mason. (Gravely.) Yes you are right. Perhaps after all it is called The Woman's Age because we men have let go—we no longer fill the scene. We have thrown ourselves heart and soul into the great struggle for Commercial Supremacy. We have ceased to dominate women because we are absorbed in dominating other men. I fear we are trying to govern the present by the spectre of the past. That is impossible. In every country where the old regime is dying out and commercialism reigns supreme, there we find this restlessness of the women. It is all wrong, it is against nature, but there is only one way to stop it, we men have got

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to stop putting all our strength, all our energy, all our masterfulness into conquering our fellow men—we have got to re-conquer the women.

Mason. (Puts his arms about her.) I guess, Cora, there always will be a dominant sex. After all it is for us men to say which one.

(They kiss passionately.)

SWIFT CURTAIN

