



*As  
Caesar's  
Wife*

*Margarita  
Spalding  
Gerry*



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[See page 27

SHE CONTINUED TO CLING TO ARMS THAT STILL CAST HER OFF

# AS CAESAR'S WIFE

A NOVEL

BY

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AS CAESAR'S WIFE





# AS CAESAR'S WIFE

## CHAPTER I

AS the country road showed signs of widening into the boulevard that should take them into the heart of the city and to Mrs. Ward's home, Cowperthwaite made another effort to get a little more speed out of the machine. But when he threw the lever over to the third speed and there was no answering throb of effort, he realized again that the maddeningly deliberate pace at which they were nearing the city was the best that could be hoped for.

He took the wheel with his left hand so he could stretch out his cramped right arm and flex and unflex the muscles and so try to shake off his deadly weariness. A gray light was sifting through the darkness. He was half relieved and half abashed to realize that it was the dawn. Chill and pitiless and forbidding, it

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hinted of terrors that its fuller light would reveal. Somewhere, faintly, a clock struck the three-quarter hour. Cowperthwaite gave a stolen glance at his watch—and slid it back into his pocket, wondering if the woman at his side knew that when the clock next struck it would be four.

But Mrs. Ward gave no sign of knowledge or of feeling. All of the vivid emotions of the hours that had passed, the hope, the disappointment, the renewed expectancy, and the later flare of feeling had ebbed under the benumbing weariness of the heavily freighted hours and left her spent and tired. If any desire was left it was merely for the end of motion, Ken's comforting arms and—peace. Her profile, turned to Cowperthwaite, with the fine and noble austerity of its straight lines and the love-provoking witchery of its curves, was a pale mask of endurance, blanched from all its quick play of light and color into quiescence, with an undershadow of some painful thought that she held in check.

A rut in the road jolted her heavily against Cowperthwaite. A shudder ran over her. With an uncontrollable impulse she pulled herself fiercely away from him. Then with the later desire of civilization to atone for discourtesy she said, quickly:

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"Oh—I beg your pardon!"

But the man had understood. His keen face was dyed with a flood of embarrassed color. He spoke half angrily:

"Surely you have no reason to feel *that way!*"

At the sound of his voice she shuddered again. The mask fell and she turned on him with the hot pride of the elementally pure woman:

"I shall never be able to touch your hand again without loathing! And hating myself for my own weakness. To think I couldn't keep myself from the stain of it! That horrible kiss! When I am *Ken's wife!* When will I be able to look at him—and not remember?"

Cowperthwaite shrugged his shoulders with a man's carefully cultivated cynicism in matters of sex. The lightness made ruthless his strong, subtle face.

"Oh—a man and a woman—alone on a long motor ride—a kiss or two—" he said, frivolously.

She challenged him almost with fury:

"A man—and myself alone in the wilderness—if I choose! How dare you class me with other women!" And the exquisite pride in her arrogant strength dazzled the man from his acquired indulgence back to his racial demand for purity in a woman. His rising anger was a

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greater tribute to her than the dawning insolence of his admiration had been:

“If your memory stretches back some years—contrary to the habit of women,” he said, deliberately, his foot on the brake for a steep descent of the misty road, “I have a score to settle. There was that time—a century back it may seem to you—when you had promised to marry me. I think—maybe—the recollection of that had something to do with this night’s work—”

There was a contemptuous inference in her face.

“No, no, I didn’t plan this,” he assured her, with indignation. “This was pure chance. The past had been buried deep enough. I had no thought but to have your help in getting hold of Ken so he could catch Remsen before he got away— Good Lord! You must have a pretty opinion of me to think me capable of a trick! But after a few hours of this—especially the latter part—and to have to see all your anxiety for Ken—and not an ounce of consideration to spare for me—and the touch of your shoulder now and then when the confounded road jolted us together—all that started me to thinking back into the past. It’s not that I have been brooding in solitude over it much of the time these five years—”

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"You don't suppose I thought that for a minute," she interrupted him, proudly. And he paused to laugh silently over the feminine pique which, in spite of her bigness of nature and the revolt of all her instincts against him, lingered in her voice.

"A man doesn't have as much time as a woman thinks, perhaps, for that sort of thing," he assured her as soon as he could speak seriously. "But—to-night—the moment—the long hours together—and your remembered sweetness, brought a few of the worst things in me to the surface, I suppose."

There was a comfortable absence of all remorsefulness in his manner.

"For the instant it seemed imperative that I should have that kiss—I suppose I ought to be overcome with shame. Indeed, I'm honestly sorry if I have hurt you. I *like* you, you know, all these things apart. You're bully. All these months you've been fighting the Ring with Ken like a man, and a straight one, giving your time and your enthusiasm just for a principle. You needn't be afraid. I've had my reprehensible fling—"

"Don't talk that way!"

Some color had come into her face with her indignation. He observed it.

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“Now see here”—he turned toward her and met her eyes frankly—“I’m not going to think of you that way again. But if you expect me to be very seriously remorseful for that one instant— Come now, be a good fellow! It was only that just for that second you were a woman—not a friend—and the girl I was once mad about. I’ll swear to you, if you like, that I won’t repeat it, but it’s beyond me to repent it. I can’t help it if you are in a rage about it; it was too pleasant for repentance. Honestly.”

Wonder at male callousness quenched the flame of anger in her face.

“So that is what it was to you?” she said, slowly. “And to me your touch, your lips with what was in them, your kiss of your friend’s wife—it’s maddening to think of. Why, Ken was your friend!”

He dropped his light tone as the memory of the old injury grew more vivid to him.

“Yes,” he said, “my ‘friend.’ But he was that before he was your lover. Much that stopped him when he had seen you. You must remember, before we drifted together in this fight last fall and so became friends again, my ‘friend’ had been your husband—the husband of the woman he stole from me—for four years. Men’s friendship,” he repeated, half to himself,



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and his clever face fell into lines of intellectual abstraction, "with fairly decent men like us holds, I suppose, against most things. But how long, I wonder, does it ever hold before conflicting claims on the same woman—even the poor shadows most of them are. And when it's a woman like you—"

He turned to survey her half curiously. Worn and anxious as she was, all the mere human in the appeal of her beauty was banished for the moment by the ravages of weariness and the traces of past anger. Even the ember glow of her straying hair was dulled by the half light into duskiess. Yet somehow she incited the cool-minded man beside her to dreams of still happiness and to the passing belief that there is no true joy but to wander in green avenues with the woman of one's love. That was the spell in Ruth's eyes which she could never see herself.

"When it's a woman like you," he went on, "I wonder if, years after the love itself has been buried, the wound made by the treachery of your taking by another man is ever healed."

"There was no treachery on Ken's part." She spoke hotly. "The weakness was mine, but it was in having ever thought I loved you. For the feeling I had for you was mere senti-

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mental friendship and a sort of craze of admiration for your cleverness. It would have been the worst injury I could have done you to have married you when Ken—just by looking at me—had made me all his. You probably won't believe that we were sorry that we hurt you. I think that almost clouded over the first months. But we couldn't doubt for a moment that love like ours must have its way. It has always hurt me, although I knew perfectly that you would find some one who would show you, as I had learned, that it was all a mistake. And it was because of that that, to-night, just for a little while before you—you kissed me—I was—foolish—too sympathetic. It's for that one moment's stupid—not understanding—that I shall never forgive myself. But, of course, you can't understand how it shames me."

She turned from him for a brooding interval. They were coming to a more thickly settled part of the city. The occasional cheaply built outlying house, with its little plot of lawn standing out against the untidy stretches of half prairie, half city common, was giving way to groups of pretty houses separated only by trim hedges, ghostly soft and billowy in the gray light. While she followed her own troubled thoughts the car ran more smoothly over macad-



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amized roads—over asphalt. In place of companionable suburbs came crowded rows of red-brick houses with an occasional outstanding one of stone. The lights in the street-lamps glowed more and more pale and sickly yellow. There was something outlandish, ghostly, in the sleeping, unlighted houses and the flagging lamp sentinels of the street.

At last, with a slight swerving of the motor, they turned into the upper extremity of her own street. With a woman's instinct she sat straighter, endeavored to bring some order out of her blown and tugging veil, and the untidy masses of her hair, whipped into flying strands and tendrils by the restless winds of many dragging miles. With a tired sigh she gave up even that attempt to restore herself to her accustomed trimness to meet her husband's eye.

They were slipping slowly and gently down the last block before they reached her house. She caught sight of it. The house was on the corner; there was one light in it. It was the only dwelling on the street that was not wrapped in soft darkness. That one light from the study window at the side stood out with ominous, startling threatening. The door was closed. There was no sign of life about the place. She gazed at the closed door with sudden terror.

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“Why, what does that mean? We always leave that door open these spring evenings until we go to bed!”

She was only half conscious that she spoke aloud, so overwhelming was her panic.

“It looks so terribly late. Why, the street-lamps are going out! They never go out until morning! Can it be *morning*? I knew it was late. But I never thought of that—I wonder where Ken is—”

Cowperthwaite, whose eyes had been fixed hard in front of him, looked at her sidewise. It sounded as if fear of her husband had that instant sprung to her heart. He himself had very little doubt as to Ken's state of mind. He guessed at his friend's latent capacity for jealousy.

“I hope he hasn't been terribly frightened about me— But he can't be or he would be at the door! There are so many motor accidents, and I'm always worried about him if he is ever so little late. I wish we could have sent him some more definite word—but we were so sure we would find him at Leesburg. It makes me frantic to think how he must have worried, and I'm always cross when I have been worried about him. I wonder if every one is like that. I suppose it is because one's nerves

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are upset. Where can Ken be? He must have got home by this time. Why isn't he here so I can tell him? I wonder if he has gone out to look for me. Oh, *poor* boy! I know he has been so anxious—it makes me ache for him—”

The clock in a near-by church chimed softly, under its breath it would seem, the hour.

“*Four!*” she gasped, looking at Cowperthwaite in unbelieving terror.

“Four o'clock.” There was something ominous in the fixed gaze with which he held her, wondering, questioning her unconsciousness, that childish unconsciousness of a pure woman which a man never quite believes in. There was a gleam of malicious humor somewhere back of the seriousness of his eyes that was almost sinister in the unkind light and the silent, withdrawn street.

“Four o'clock,” he repeated, solemnly, as the machine slid gently to rest before her own house. There was a dawning expectation of excitement in his face. “Yes, I am afraid Ken will be—*anxious.*” Cowperthwaite was rapidly summing up in his own mind the account of the night's events that he would give his friend.

With a cautious avoidance of noise the door opened and a man came out. He loomed tall and straight and dark in the cold light. A

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white lock in his black hair was like white-heat on cold iron.

He stood at the top of the flight of steps, surveying leisurely the automobile and its occupants. Then he too pulled out his watch and looked at it lengthily, turning the face carefully to catch the pale glow of light in the east. At last, with a curiously stiff and clumsy gait, he came down the steps.

## CHAPTER II

THERE is nothing more ominous than the enforced restraint of an elemental nature. Neither his wife nor his friend had ever seen Ken Ward before when word and action had not been the inevitable outlet of the forces of his life. They would not have been surprised at any expression of turbulent emotion—it might, after the long hours of watching and uncertainty, have been equally joy at relief from anxiety or anger because of the suspense to which they had subjected him. Cowperthwaite half expected some furious personal attack.

But there was nothing. Ward silently came to the side of the motor, put out his hand to help his wife alight, steadied her automatically and impersonally when, cramped by long sitting in one posture, she stumbled on alighting. In silence the three came up the steps together, Ward ceremoniously falling back so the two could precede him, and into the closed and somber house. An abortive attempt of Mrs. Ward's to speak outside he had silenced with a gesture.

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The door of the reception-room was closed, the hall still in darkness. Finally they found themselves in the study, where, in air close and lifeless from being long shut in, the reading-lamp burned low.

Mrs. Ward fell into a chair with a little sigh of fatigue. But Cowperthwaite would not sit—he was waiting for Ward to speak. The two men were facing each other. Ruth was a little to one side. Finally Ward raised his head and looked at Cowperthwaite—expectantly. It seemed that no power in the world could make the husband speak.

The strong lines of Ward's features were harsh; the white streak in his black hair—there since boyhood—glittered as the lamplight touched it; his face was Indian-like in its swarthinness; a diagonal line ran from each nostril to the corners of his compressed mouth; the eyes which usually glowed, rich and dark with every emotion, were lifeless and whity brown.

Still he waited. Finally Cowperthwaite spoke. In the very moment of speaking he smiled to himself at the impulse which made his voice, in spite of his effort, apologetic and almost timid.

“We have been delayed. Mrs. Ward did not think to leave word where we had gone because



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we had gone in search of you and expected to find you. She thought you were at Leesburg.”

He paused. There was no change of expression on Ward's face. Only tense waiting. Cowperthwaite, conscious of the effort to make his voice more natural, went on:

“I am sorry you have had all this anxiety. Mrs. Ward has been much worried. But we have had bad luck. The infernal motor—”

At the last word some infinitely ironical amusement seemed to come to Ward and he broke his silence.

“Yes—the motor—” His voice clacked dryly on the word. “Fortunately I was not in entire ignorance. A friend of mine saw you start yesterday afternoon. He was not sure whether it was at five or quarter past. I didn't wait for him to decide. But he was sure that Mrs. Ward was with you.”

“Didn't Mary tell you I had gone out driving? I sent word to her not to wait dinner for me. I didn't think of telling you because we expected to find you—” Mrs. Ward's appealing eyes were on him from the shadow in which she sat. The memory of Cowperthwaite's hateful kiss which she couldn't shake off was oppressing her. It made her begin to understand, what would otherwise have seemed impossible to her, that it might

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be some jealous anger of Cowperthwaite that was making Ken act so. Some scenes of their courtship came to her mind, and she shivered with dread.

He didn't look at her, although he answered:

"That is what Cowperthwaite said, I believe. But I had no talk with Mary. It was late when I got home and I knew then with whom you were. So I sent her off."

"Now see here, Ken," said Cowperthwaite, decidedly. "Suppose you do the judicial act and suspend judgment until I have told you the whole story."

"Yes," said Ward, with a smile that was not becoming. "Let us by all means have your story."

Cowperthwaite found that he had to contend with a rising irritation. But he controlled himself, telling himself that Ken had the right to all the infernal contempt that was in his face if he thought—but confound it!—what right had he to think that? In the effort to get everything out of his mind but a straightforward narrative of the night's incidents, he seated himself and bent forward to enforce each detail on the man who waited.

"Yesterday afternoon, after you had left me, Brown came to my office with the news that he had succeeded at last in locating Remsen. I



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nearly jumped out of my chair when he said that Remsen was to be sent back to the old country, sail to-morrow—to-day, I mean; funds probably supplied by Mayo. But the stunning point was that he had shadowed Remsen to the house of some friends out at Rawlings, where he was going to be last night. Brown had tried to get hold of you, of course, then Wilson. Couldn't find either. Thought, since we had been hand in glove in this business, I might know where you were. Was in a state of mind because he had had his orders not to leave Remsen wherever he went; he had preparations to make if he had got to cross with him; didn't see how he could get off and follow you up, too.

“I sent him off to make his arrangements and told him I would look you up. I knew, of course, that Remsen's testimony was the crux in this whole fight of the city against Mayo. I did a little swearing just then that my appointment as counsel to assist you was still tied up in red tape. If that had been made I could have just clapped a subpoena on Remsen and it would have been all right. But I thought I could get hold of you easily enough. Well—I called you up at the house, at the club, every place where I thought you might be. Mrs. Ward was out, too, so I couldn't get anything from her.”

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There had been no sign from Ward during the whole of the recital. Even when Cowperthwaite spoke of the appointment, and Ward could have told him that it had been made the afternoon Cowperthwaite had left, Ward gave no sign. His remorseless eyes fixed on the other man waited always for more. But at the mention of his wife's name a quiver ran over him and he moistened his dry lips.

"Then I had the machine brought around and drove about the streets a bit, hoping I might run into you or see some one who could tell me something about you. It was then that I met Mrs. Ward—"

Again Ward winced at the use of his wife's name. He blindly felt his way to his big desk-chair and crouched down in it, his eyes never leaving Cowperthwaite. Mrs. Ward, taking his relaxation as a sign that the sinister something that had kept her dazed was lifting, rose to go to him. But a peremptory motion of her husband's hand held her and she sat down again.

Cowperthwaite went on in his dispassionate voice:

"Mrs. Ward said that you had 'phoned her that you were going out to Leesburg, that there was an important witness out there who had promised at last to talk. She was sure she could

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locate the house—you had pointed it out to her once, but she couldn't remember the man's name or the street. But approaching it from the direction you had taken we figured out we could find it—”

“So you—utilized the opportunity. And you couldn't, I suppose, have taken some one with you—your chauffeur?” The rasping voice, with its undercurrent of hateful suspicion, was one that neither Cowperthwaite nor Mrs. Ward had ever heard Ken use before, except perhaps in the examination of some corrupt witness who could be reached only through fear. Cowperthwaite, accustomed to the respect his career had earned, colored with anger. But before he spoke his sense of justice pled for the man:

“There wasn't any time to hunt him up; he was home sick,” he had said when Ward broke in with harsh impatience:

“Get on with your story.”

“But, Ken, you remember telling me you were going out to Leesburg?”

Mrs. Ward's voice came tremulously out of her soft shadow. “Weren't we right in trying to find you?”

Her husband did not look at her.

“Let Cowperthwaite tell his story—first,” he said.

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"We got out to Leesburg in good time; it was just six when we pulled up and it's almost twenty miles. It took us half an hour to locate the house. But you had left—"

"Exactly," put in Ward, still with the sardonic smile on his face. Cowperthwaite challenged sharply:

"You *did* go to Leesburg, I believe. Mrs. Ward was not misinformed—"

"Leave my wife's name out of the conversation!" Ward spoke with a burst of fury.

"Will you kindly tell me how to do it?" Cowperthwaite was losing his temper rapidly, but he made another effort at coolness. "You can easily find out whether we were there at that time," he said, with curt civility.

"I have no doubt you were—it is a pleasant drive to Leesburg."

Ward's tone was little short of maddening. But Cowperthwaite went on with dogged determination to get through his story. "If he still chooses then to be a fool," his unspoken thought went on, "it's his responsibility, not mine."

"At Leesburg they said you had gone out into the country twenty miles distant to find a man who would back up what they had told you. We found his house without much difficulty, but

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you had not been there. And it took us until eight to get there. It was on the drive back that our troubles began. First I found we were going to run out of gasolene and had to go miles out of our way to get some. The next event was a puncture and I wasn't carrying a fresh tire. The nearest garage was off the main road; we had to leave the machine and walk half a mile or so to get to it. It was ten by the time we were fixed up and off again. Finally, to avoid running into a belated farm-wagon, we collided with a telegraph pole and the machine was badly smashed up. If we hadn't been running pretty slowly at the time we would both have been seriously hurt. As it was, we got off with a few scratches. The driver of the wagon towed us into the nearest town, and there I left the wreck and took another motor. The town happened to be where Remsen was, so we saw him while we waited. I'll tell you about that later. That was at Rawlings, forty miles from here. It was nearly twelve before the man there got us fixed up. He had gone to bed and it took half an hour to make him understand what we wanted. So at last we started home—"

"You couldn't have put my wife on the cars and come home alone?" Ward's manner was



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perfunctory, as of a man who knows the answer before he asks.

"Why, I did inquire about trains." Cowperthwaite spoke with some confusion, remembering that his perversity had overtaken him at that stage and he hadn't really wanted to find one. "There were none until one, and I hardly thought you would have cared to have your wife left to make her way home alone from a locality where there are as many toughs as abide there. Moreover—"

"I understand—it was consideration," said Ward, with a sneer.

"There is nothing more to the story except that the machine I had acquired developed a speed, at its best, of not more than ten miles an hour. The roads between Rawlings and the city are rotten, and, as I said, it's a good forty miles. That accounts, I believe, fully, for the delay."

Cowperthwaite stopped speaking. His eyes coolly fixed on Ward, awaiting what he should do. The other man brooded, still with that fixed ominous constraint. Ruth, feeling that surely by this time much of Ken's unhappy jealousy must have vanished, came softly forward and smoothed the threatening white lock back into proper obscurity—a caress time-honored and

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invariably effective. But he moved his head impatiently and the gentle hand fell, repulsed. Being a somewhat proud and only occasionally docile young woman, she went back to her obscurity, thinking, with hurt indignation:

“I don't see why Ken should be so unreasonable about it. Surely we couldn't have done anything else. I wonder if he knows how tired I am.”

But the pleading touch had had its effect. Moreover, the elemental fury that, storm after storm, had swept over him during the long hours of waiting, was sinking; Cowperthwaite's manner, the reasonableness of the account, deep-seated reverence for his wife, had begun to have some weight. The destructive rage that he had with pain held in check when he had met the motor was ebbing. After a few more moments of the lessened strain, of the blessed knowledge that Ruth was back, unharmed, looking at him pleadingly with her faithful eyes—eyes proud for the rest of the world, submissive for him alone—and he was ready with whole-hearted generosity to confess himself a fool. The knowledge of his wife's purity was rising in him, beating in upon his incredible suspicion of her, in wave after wave of splendid passion.

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In the glow of it Ward turned to Cowperthwaite and gave him a hearty fist. It would have taken a man, and a friend, to know that his averted eyes and the hasty pressure of his hand meant that Ken was ashamed of his insane jealousy and relied upon a man's understanding of it for indulgence. But Cowperthwaite did know. He wrung the hand Ward had held out to him, and got himself out of the room as expeditiously as he could.

Outside, he drew a long breath of relief. Then he laughed:

“Old Ken wouldn't be a pleasant person to meet if a man had anything more than a minute's damned idiocy on his conscience,” he said lightly to himself.



### CHAPTER III

AS the door closed after Cowperthwaite, Ward turned his eyes to look, for the first time since her coming, full at his wife. The glow of his passion of belief was still with him, the passion of his remorse. But she sat broodingly, her head on her hand, her eyes on the floor. The sinister cloud that was over everything had taken her thoughts back to the scene she wanted only to forget. Surely, it was, somehow, her fault that that thing had come to her. She was feeling dishonored, tainted. Something in her air of spent fatigue, of evident depression, the absence of her usual buoyant belief in herself, startled him out of his new-found security.

“Ruth,” he said, softly, possessed by a sudden, crazy fear, a craving to meet her eyes and read in them, as always, that there was nothing in the whole world that could come between him and her. She raised her head, but there was something that veiled her eyes.

“Ruth,” he said, demanding. She smiled at

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him, doing her best to reach him. He knew there was hidden knowledge in her heart that stood between.

Again the storm of his passion was rising. But his voice was quiet and gentle, as one speaks when one would not awaken some sleeping thing:

“Cowperthwaite’s story is as it happened? In all these hours you can say—you have never told me a word that was not true—Cowperthwaite’s story was—?”

Those true and beautiful eyes would let him go no farther. His speech stopped—for very awe of her. But his agonized eyes still questioned. Then—most impossible and most horrible thing in the world—he saw a tide of crimson rise from her full white throat, damnedly beautiful in the low-cut frock, he thought, with a rush of hot blood to his own face. As he watched it with a fearful fascination—everything that was great and good in Kenneth Ward was swept away before the hurricane of his rage. In an instant he was transported—a beast—a devil. He made a blind rush toward her.

“It was just a—an impulse,” she was trying to say, the shamed red still in her face, but fronting him bravely. “Just a silly memory. He regrets it—and—I blame myself—I hate

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myself—I never dreamed I could be so disloyal.”

Ward gave a hoarse, choked cry. The last word meant, inevitably, the worst to him. Rage transported, blinded, deafened him. He never heard the low, hesitating words in which she told him what had happened. The outraged, defrauded male in him was filling his ears with the clamor of the demand for vengeance. He drove the very sound of her voice away from him. But Ruth went bravely, determinedly on, thinking that he understood.

That confession of the small weakness, to her entire whiteness so black, could mean to him the confession of a crime, unfaithfulness to vows she could not conceive of breaking, never dawned upon her. She continued to cling to arms that still cast her off and gasp out pleadings that fell upon his fury like brave new fuel for the flames.

Ward flung her finally from him. Then a little wondering, hurt sound that escaped from her pierced through the murky cloud in which he was. He realized what he had done. With a terrific effort he tried to calm himself.

For a time he stood silent, his great chest heaving, crowding back into a moment's decent truce the naked passions that had torn him. Then, at last, he managed to gulp out some sort

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of an expression of regret, and asked her to leave him for a moment so he could "think things over." He motioned toward the next room with a jerk of the chin.

Ruth, too stunned to feel anything clearly, obeyed him, feeling vaguely that Ken's anger was beyond all reason. Ward stood where she had left him, staring darkly at the floor.

## CHAPTER IV

SOME minutes after she had left Ward raised his head and looked blankly around the room. The momentary ebbing of his passion had left him flabby; nerves and will hung slack. It was the mood in which one catches at the irrelevant detail and dwells upon it with almost tender interest, feeling, vaguely, that here is refuge. So he snapped out the light of the reading-lamp. He raised the shades higher and flung the windows open, commenting in his own mind on the freshness of the early morning.

“But I must think,” he said, conscientiously. Still, he came back to his desk with as many loiterings by the way as when, still a school-boy, he prodded his unwilling brain to study while his heart was outside with the sunny hillsides and the leaping fish. His attention caught at the orderly piles of documents on his desk, held together with rubber bands, or kept from straying with paper-weights—all Ruth’s doing. He caught himself with a reproving frown at the thought and forced himself back to the con-

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temptation of the papers—the Macarthy case—the Oleson—the steadily accumulating pile relating to Boss Mayo himself—it needed little to clinch the case against him.

He took from his pocket the notes as to testimony he had secured that day at Leesburg before—they said they had gone to the little country town to find him. The frown came on his forehead again because the unwelcome thought had intruded before the moment that he had settled with himself to take it up. He placed the notes safely in a pigeonhole of his desk and then busied himself by doing the same with all the others, first going over them and arranging them with scrupulous care.

In sorting them—it was somehow imperative that his desk should be cleared before he could settle down to think—he came across one draft of a letter which was to be manifolded and sent to various members of the Mayo ring whom they hoped to frighten into turning State's evidence. Automatically he started to put it on the typewriter-table by the window, where Ruth had been giving many hours of her busy day to his work. There had been more detail than he and his assistants could manage, and to a poor man the saving of a stenographer's salary was a consideration. Moreover, no clerk that could be



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secured could be worth as much as Ruth, with her quick intelligence and her enthusiasm. He hesitated at the typewriter. It was full of association with her. That visible sign of her brought it all back. With one despairing look around the room, clearly visible now in the new light, with the homely attractiveness into which hard hours of companionable work had worn it, he buried his black head in his hands and tried to force his benumbed brain to think.

“What did Cowperthwaite say? Damn him!” Again his mind sheered off before the unbearable thought that followed. He clutched his head while the white lock gleamed silvery against the dull red of his temples. “Somehow I must get at the truth of this. Why can't I think?”

With a sense of fresh escape from the agony that lay near the thought of Ruth his thoughts rebelled again, deflected by the sight of an old inkstand, the gift of Will Cowperthwaite in some boyish Christmas-time. And the soul of the man, tempest-tossed between stubborn hope and stubborn hatred, was at peace for the moment, calmed by the wanderings of his memory.

He was in the little Michigan town of his boyhood, with its sparse settlement of Eastern families and its host of Norwegian peasants. He sat in the bare, primitive school where Will

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Cowperthwaite and he were the leaders, the "smartest boys in school," rivals and friends always, neck to neck in mischief and in study. Boyish escapades and ambitions thronged into his mind—shared during the trudging hours of return from Saturday's fishing or high and dry on a bank sunning brown legs after an hour's swimming—shamefaced promises of lasting friendship, dreams exchanged of what they would do when they were men—shared glimpses into the hidden holy of holies of a boy's heart. Almost joyously a wave of belief in his friend swept over him—Will Cowperthwaite could never have done a thing that wasn't white!

Then his mood changed—he had seen too much of the lives of other men to have it last. He remembered the blackness of the hate he had felt for one ugly instant when it was announced that Will Cowperthwaite—not he—had won the school prize that they had both been working for.

"Good God!" he whispered, suddenly. "Perhaps when I took Ruth away from him he felt like that!" And he built up for himself again, as he had during the awful hours of waiting, a picture of Cowperthwaite during all these later friendly years with that evil thing lurking in his heart. "And I played right into his hands,"



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he thought, despising himself for his foolish confidence. "As if any man could forget—her!"

Again his thoughts drifted moodily—wisps of recollection out of the wild years in the Yukon—picture after picture—forgotten during the years of practice of a law-exalting profession among men whose passions, tamed or hidden, offered the illusion of an ordered world. The face of a chap who was once his partner when they came upon some straggler trying to jump their claim; the stern relentlessness of the posse of men come to string up the poor boy who had proved to be the camp thief; the still vengeance of a man—what was his name now? He wanted help to bury his wife, smiling with a bullet through her heart, beside—the other man. That man—and all the others of untainted manhood—would never have hesitated as he had done, weighing pros and cons which might dip the balance wrongly and so let the guilty go. There were his strong, bare hands if need be. He stretched them out and sat looking at them with a curious interest, working the great tense fingers like the claws of a crouching cat.

What were the words Cowperthwaite had used when he came that day upon him and Ruth—the day she had said she loved him? He had

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been back just one week in Midland. But that one week had been—gloriously—enough!

“Why didn't he fight me then? I would have given him his revenge,” Ward muttered to himself. “But—good Lord! When a man and a woman love each other that way there isn't anything else to do! Better then than later!” But still Cowperthwaite's face flashed on him out of the past as Ruth and he had swept by him, love-delirious. It had been tense and white.

*So this is the way he took!* Well, Ward admitted the method was one of the simplest, most primitive justice! But, after all, could it be so? Could it be possible that Will Cowperthwaite all these years had been harboring a sinister passion for vengeance? Had the last months of splendid struggle to free the city from the unclean growths that were throttling her been nothing but a pretense to bring Cowperthwaite nearer to the wife of the honest prosecutor that the city had at last raised up? Had the hearty, brotherly hand-clasp that—next to his wife's love—had been the reward of a day of tedious fighting been mere clever acting to cover up a purpose more corrupt than any that they sought to punish? Ward's reason revolted from the conclusion. And yet the recollection flashed upon the tormented man that once, two years after a

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playmate had shown Will some small treachery, he had remembered and had "paid him back."

Ward jumped up. He couldn't endure to sit still with the ugly, feverish thoughts. Although he half knew they were impossible, they came to him each time in the guise of irrefutable truth. He clasped his hands tight behind him to keep them from threshing the air about him in his torture. Somehow the small restraint bore its fruit in stilling the inner tumult for a moment. So, for the first time, he thought with some measure of calmness.

"Suppose you suspend judgment," Cowperthwaite had said.

That was fair enough. Will Cowperthwaite would know, if there was proof of guilt to be had, his friend would have it. "Will is no coward," thought Ward. "And, after all, if revenge was what he wanted, wouldn't he boast of it, not deny it, now?" The doubt calmed him.

Then a very torrent of craving tenderness came over Ward, an agony of longing to keep on the throne, where he had placed her, the woman of his love. Into his stormy, half-lawless life Ruth had come, sign of all earth's power of goodness. He had welcomed her, instantaneously, as the expression of all that was high and lovely; he had stood still to worship when each intruding thought

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of her had flashed into some crowded instant of his life; her standards had become his own; she alone kept the key to his conscience; all of his enthusiasm for right-doing was based upon the idolatrous conviction that his wife could not even think anything wrong—when—timidly as men like him must always do—he prayed, it was that he might, years hence, deserve her whiteness. With the threat of that throne's toppling, all of earth and heaven reeled around the man. No, God help him, he would not act till he was sure.

“That story,” he braced himself for thought. “How does it fit together?” Link by link, the detail of hour by hour, he went over it. Six o'clock when they got to Leesburg; half past when they had found he had left; an hour to cover the distance to find the man who was supposed to back up the testimony; he thought that place was Beltsville. Then miles out of the way to get gasolene; the business of the tire; the collision and the long delay at Rawlings. Will said they had to change machines.

Ward recalled the machine—yes, he remembered it wasn't Cowperthwaite's. It had looked just about ready for the scrap-heap, too. The story hung together very well. If it might be true! And he could rethrone Ruth and look out and find the sky still of the same color!

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“If it were not true, if she had been—guilty—if I should kill Cowperthwaite—what of her? Her life blasted, shamed!” His own agony seemed small beside the horror that he conjured up! Was the crazy delight of vengeance worth a single hurt throb of her heart?

The story did hang together. It might very well have happened. Was it possible for any woman who had seemed what she was—*been* what she was—because of one temptation—Why, it would have been a temptation only if she loved Cowperthwaite—and she had proved that she didn't. Oh—he could believe it! The deadly cloud was rising. There was no need for suffering. He could draw a wholesome breath again.

“Thank God!” he said aloud, in a frenzy of gratitude. “She is innocent. *I won't have to hate her!*”

For one instant he knew absolute joy.

Then cruelly the picture of her came before him, with her eyes downcast and that shamed and agonizing blush—

“Oh—oh-h-h—I had forgotten. *Why, she herself confessed it!*” Her words returned to him. The trivial words she used to express the blackest crime in sin's calendar, the most damning evidence of her—lightness. “I wouldn't have be-



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lieved it from any lips but hers. 'Just an impulse.' God! 'A silly memory'—'he regrets it'—'I blame myself'—'I hate myself for my disloyalty.'"

Ward had been without food for a long time, exhausted by his many hours of suffering, too overwhelmed with misery and rage to act at the moment with any coherence.

But now he was maddened past restraint. There was no question in his mind that her words were proof of the worst. He made a blind rush forward. He meant to kill Cowperthwaite, the weapons of his vengeance the great hands that primal Nature had made strong to tempt him. He had forgotten the man had gone.

In the rush toward the door he crashed against his desk and fell across it. There was a noise. He had dislodged something.

"The books," he muttered hoarsely, and automatically stooped to pick them up. While he was huddling them together on the desk he remembered that he had sent Cowperthwaite away in the confidence that his friend believed in his story. That confused Ward. Still he went on, repeating stupidly, "The books." Then in the bewilderment of his senses, the orderly books and papers, signs of the majesty of the law, of all the manly purpose of his life, the tools with which he

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and Cowperthwaite and Ruth had hoped to raise a temple to civic cleanness, the great and sacred purpose of his life, to serve, unselfishly, his weaker brother, spoke to him. At that moment, whatever he might think them later, these voices seemed to calm the fever of his anguish, to speak of peace and forgiveness and of greater things than his own manhood. Slowly, disjointedly, these warnings came—then clearer.

“If I punish him and her or him alone—what follows? They were seen to go off together. In an hour from the discovery of my—justice—all the city will know. And then, ‘Reformer, Reform Thyself!’ ‘The Wife of the Prosecuting Attorney!’ Good God! How clearly I can see the head-lines! ‘The Reform Counsel!’ ‘The Fear of Evil-doers!’ It will be the crowning sensation that he was working with us. Everything we have been working for—everything that every decent man in this shamed city has been hoping for—will be done away with in one foul breath!

“But—to let them go! It’s hard—impossible. Oh—but what have I lived for if I can’t put down myself? What is this *myself*, the thing I call my man’s honor? They say it’s the mere brute desire for possession—brute vengeance at the snatching away of one’s brute food. What’s the use of all the bragging I’ve been doing if I am going to



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destroy now the larger purpose because of this mere *myself*? No, it's the bigger object. All the smaller things must go—

“But—how can I bear it, Ruth, to see you live beside me in tainted safety, always beside me? So much worse than your mere—death. And to condone—*forgive*. It was so much blacker because my faith was perfect. And let *that man* go—because I gave him the chance—being my friend. I can't do it! *I can't do it!*”

With the wild rebellion of his last words still in his heart he made a final effort, summoned up all the greatness in him, his hands clenched, his deep chest strained to its utmost:

“I'll forgive her!” He said it aloud. “*I will* forgive her.”

## CHAPTER V

HE stood for some minutes in the numb inactivity that followed the splendid exaltation of his sacrifice. Then he turned and went deliberately into the next room. Better have the first sight of Ruth over with, and say what he must. His tense nerves snapped into a spasm of unreasoning irritation when he realized that she was not there. Why wasn't she there! She reappeared.

"I heard the milkman," she said to him. She, too, was made to feel that her action needed explanation.

Ward had to have another minute before he could speak with any steadiness. He could see that she was waiting for him to say something. But it was the blessed banality of the commonplace that gave him refuge.

"Isn't he rather early?" He was congratulating himself on the admirable casualness of his tone.

But as Ruth answered, "No, I think it's his usual hour," she blushed hotly at the inference in her words. And Ward's half-tamed rage

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surged up and choked him. In the next instant he had pulled himself up from his lapse with an intolerable sense of shame. Yet all the time something within him, the childish something that always persists in feeling there must be some appeal from pain, was moaning with fine pathos.

“Is it going to be always like this?”

He put that down, too, telling himself that the first thing he must do was to get himself in hand. Pushing back the insistent urge with which the tragedy demanded to be considered he dwelt upon the details by which he should gain mastery. First he must get control of his voice, still the wild pounding of his heart, keep his hands steady. These were shaking so he had to put them into his pockets. With the reassuring touch of calmness the mere position gave him he dared to meet Ruth's eyes, holding them with his own while he muttered some sort of an explanation, laying his outbreak of an hour back to the long strain of anxiety for her. He felt triumphantly that he was facing her steadily. Then, seeing the fury had gone out from him, she took heart and forgot the cause of it. All her face flushed into unimaginable beauty with the relief she felt.

At that moment this was to Ward the greatest

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insult. But he bore it quietly without moving. He bore quietly, too, her drifting toward him, the momentary timid clinging of her hand upon his arm. But he moved immediately, with some polite pretext of having work to do before he left.

Feeling that she had been repulsed, Ruth drew away from him with a flaming up of her splendid color. It meant anger this time, not embarrassment. She felt that, since he had forgiven the fault she had confessed to, he ought to be generous enough to forget it.

She paused at the door.

"This is the day you have to go to Chicago," she said, with coolness as great as his own. "It will be a tiresome trip. You can't get them over the long-distance?" She was a model of courteous consideration. And her husband, in spite of his fixed determination not to feel anything, was incensed; it was as if she had a right to be indignant. He wondered, with a sudden, sick repulsion from her, if all women were callous like that.

But Ruth had had her second thought of the reason he had to be angry with her.

"It will take him a little while to get over it," she thought, wistfully. Then she caught eagerly at the relief of action. "I'll go up-stairs and pack

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your bag." Over her shoulder she called back to him:

"It's the eight-o'clock express you always get, isn't it? How many days shall I pack for?"

He had said, hastily, "I can get home tomorrow on the midnight," before he considered. "No; come to think of it, it will take three days at least." He grasped at the prospect of respite the absence from her furnished him, with a great breath of surprised relief.

She caught the tone. But her voice was steadier than his own as she halted at the top of the flight to speak to him:

"Will you need a dress-coat or will your dinner-coat do?"

"Oh, anything. It doesn't matter," he answered, hastily, diving into his work-room again for his papers. "There won't be anything but dinner with those fellows at their club—possibly only luncheon. Just put in plenty of collars and things. One needs three times one's usual allowance there."

Alone in the study, he couldn't act for a moment. The exquisite relief of being off guard had to be savored. He could let his face fall into the lines that expressed his sick despair.

He delayed as long as he could, knowing all

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the while that the thing that really pressed was to decide how he could say good-by to Ruth.

That seemed more impossible of solution than any of the so-called bigger, wider problems that faced him. Over it and over it again he went.

If he left without kissing her it would widen the breach between them. She would know that he had not really forgiven her and he had pledged himself to forgive. Well, that question he could settle with himself while he was away. He would have three days and two nights in which to decide his future course. But this other thing had to be settled now.

If he tried to say good-by, as he had all the other mornings of their life together—surely that was what should be done. After all, what was it? Just a moment's touch, a contact. Couldn't he force himself to do so much while his soul stood somewhere outside, aloof? That needn't bind him to any future living. All that he could thresh out when he was blessedly alone.

While he was arguing with himself he knew he could not. There was no power that could make him touch her, desecrate the memory of all the love that had been between them.

His papers crammed into their case, he still sat there, lost in the bitter wretchedness that had risen to take the place of the frenzy that had



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passed. How could he say good-by or not say it? In his throbbing indecision he looked up at the clock that still ticked upon the mantel.

"There isn't much time," he muttered, grateful for the momentary stay of his thought.

Then the pretext occurred to him that that would make a plausible reason for going away without saying good-by. He hugged it, going over the details of it with the crafty care of a conspirator.

He rushed out into the hall with all the noisy signs of violent haste.

"Ruth," he called, "is my bag ready? I find I haven't a minute to spare. I'll have to stop and have a talk with Wilson on my way to the station. And you needn't worry about my breakfast. I'll get some at the station or on the train."

His wife hurried to the landing, closing the bag as she came.

"I think I have put everything in," she said, breathlessly. "But if I haven't—"

"I'll know it isn't your fault," he laughed. In the feeling that his plan was going to be successful he found that he could laugh. He was half-way up the stairs. "Just reach it down to me," he said; "I haven't a minute."

He took the bag out of her hands and hurried





"THERE! I DIDN'T SAY GOOD-BY! IT 'LL KEEP TILL I COME BACK"



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to the door. When he got there he called back, with an elaborate air of having just remembered: "There! I didn't say good-by! Can't take the time now. It 'll keep till I come back."

He shut the door behind him. But, although he assured himself all the way to the car that the whole episode was what would have happened to any one, he could not shut out of his consciousness the shadow in Ruth's hurt and wondering eyes. Even when he smoldered in anger that she could contrive to look surprised the eyes pleaded with him. For whatever other emotion might find expression in them, Ruth's eyes were always, underneath their pride and beauty, dumbly asking people to be kind.

On the train for a time Ward lost himself in work. During the recess that had occurred because of Judge Barnard's illness he had to formulate a plan of action. The Garvin case was the next of the series of graft prosecutions on the docket. Now that he was able to think of anything besides Ruth, the news that Cowperthwaite had brought concerning Remsen hit Ward hard. For the moment the public man was so far to the front that Ward felt the sting of disappointment over the loss of that almost indispensable witness before the twinge of ugly

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hate at the recurrence of the thought of Cowperthwaite.

With Remsen escaped, what was to be done? It was the first reverse of any seriousness that Ward had experienced since the better element in the city, led by the Norwick Civic Club, had secured his election as prosecuting attorney—a man who could be neither bought nor intimidated. With the aid of Cowperthwaite, who was, perhaps, the dominating intellectual force of the movement, Ward had conducted the cases to the point where Boss Mayo's indictment was at least in sight. His plan had been to first convict Garvin of having bought a valuable street-railroad franchise of Boss Mayo. Then, as a natural sequence, the indictment of Mayo himself for having, as chairman of the City Council, received a bribe, would follow. Although they could, of course, have subpœnaed Mayo as witness, it was not thought advisable to bring him to the stand until his case was called. Mayo on the stand was a too dangerous possibility.

Remsen, the ward politician whom their detectives believed to have been the go-between in the transaction, was the witness upon whose testimony the case rested. Ward had intended to subpœna him that very day; it had not seemed advisable to have the Ring warned of their

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knowledge about Remsen any earlier in the case than was necessary; the attorney winced as he realized that he had made a mistake.

“Now that Remsen has gone, what’s the next best way to get at them?” Ward scowled at the seat in front of him as he brought his mind to the problem. “There’s that secretary fellow, Lyman. In the nature of things he must know something. Lucky I caught him before he had a chance to skip, too. But he is a mighty clever fellow and hand in glove with Garvin and Mayo, too. It will be pretty hard to get anything out of him. He’s smooth. He is probably looking forward to a partnership with Garvin and has everything at stake.”

Ward stared at the succession of level wooded stretches flying past his window, intent on points of attack that might startle the truth that they sought from Lyman. “I’ll ask Will,” was his involuntary impulse. He pulled himself up with a frown.

For a time Ward’s frowning intentness put its questions to the successions of villages and farm-houses set in the midst of their gently rolling fields. But back in his mind something warned him that all his effort to keep the thought of Ruth away was useless. Coming nearer and nearer was the real center of his thought. Shun

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it as he might, the tragic problem of his wife bore down on him, breaking down his defenses one by one.

For a long time his desire for thought resolved itself into mere chaotic gusts of rebellious anger and lapses into dumb suffering. But at last, slouched down into a corner, his head sunk between his shoulders, his black eyes searching the shifting landscape with gloomy intentness, he got the issue that he faced directly in front of him. He couldn't veer away from it again.

"I've got to decide what to do," he vowed to himself between set teeth.

Then all the thoughts that had been mere flying, drifting clouds of unformed anguish during the hours that lay just back of him began to take shape and coherence around the aching central query: Was there any course of action he could take that would not mean shipwreck for them both?

"I ought to have killed him!" The thought came to the primitive male within him with a sudden, savage leaping up of satisfaction. And unconsciously his eyes fell again on his big, bare hands that twitched hungrily as he looked. But the next instant the sullen recognition was wrung from him that, since he had not done vengeance at the moment, the time for that had passed.



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Ward was no metaphysician. But he felt dumbly that, with the later impulse that had come to stay his murder passion, the era of the mere elemental in him was ended. He had once for all routed them, those voices that had counseled him to do direct, unthinking brute justice. He had ranged himself for all future time as a thinking, reasoning, mind-directed man.

That specter, then, was laid forever. What remained? Here Ward stirred uneasily, for something was coming that would push him hard.

“I said that I would forgive her! Can I do it? But that means trust!”

He spoke the words aloud, forced by the tension of his thinking. They came to his own ears with a sense of fateful utterance, although the rumble of the cars kept his nearest neighbors from knowing he had spoken.

Then he tried to picture to himself their life together. Remorselessly he went over all of its relations. Ruth welcoming him home; Ruth, his wife, before the world. Watched only by the throbbing emptiness that still to his tight-wrought consciousness was full of a great judging, exacting, loving presence, Ward crimsoned darkly, painfully. It was with a sense of intolerable effort that he took up his unsparing thought



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again. Ruth "before the world" meant—Ruth in the eyes of other men!

His breath came faster in great, gasping, clutching gusts. And with the strangling grip of passion that the mere thought brought him he knew, inexorably, that the years of his loyal, unthinking belief in her were over. He should always throb and suffer when the eyes of another man were on her; he would be able to read nothing but baffling secrecy in those beautiful, soft eyes of hers.

That brought him face to face with it, the pitiless fact that was at the base of all his thinking:

"If I can't forgive her wholly, greatly, with love, as Christ forgave, what then? Must I—" His thoughts stopped short before the shadow of that grim accounting. His heart went out into pitiful, passionate pleadings to the Presence: "How can I? I'm not You, God. I'm only a mass of clay with something of Your Spirit stirring in me! She is my own, my very soul, my body. Mine grasped to me out of the incalculable loneliness of the universe, the something that has answered to my longings, the charm that has seemed the key to all the puzzle, my food, my drink, the thing that was my own! I can't give her up. You Yourself could not expect it of me. Being what I am, a man!"

His agony was unbearable. He jumped up

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and walked, unsteadily, the whole length of the swaying, rushing train. His black eyes brooding in incarnate tragedy, his grim mouth set rigidly to still its working, straight ahead he went, banging open heavy doors, staggering through vestibules, clutching backs of seats. There were on the express acquaintances of Ward's—men who, seeing him, started up to hail him, for he was a man of many friends, vital, coming into full sight as a man of force and principle, a powerful man in whom good men trusted. But after another glance at his rigid face each man fell back into his chair and wondered.

All the length of his futile marching the thing pursued him. Ward didn't know at what instant it was presented to him as a coherent demand:

“If I can't forgive her the only decent thing is to do without her.” When it was once said Ward shivered in the chill.

Dropping into his seat, he forced his mind to go over all the length of his life without her, the never-ending emptiness, the longing that would not be quieted, the hunger that could not be stilled. His road stretched before him, dark, stony, endless, lighted only by a pale glimmer at its very end. It was impossible that at that moment the man could see anything that could

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weigh by so much as a feather against his need of her. Right, was a mocking abstraction and peace with his own soul, an aching blank. Just once his mind forced the thought before him: that some day good might come from the unbearable sacrifice.

"There isn't a man living that could feel it!" he said, furiously, to his own soul.

Then that ebbed, too, and for a time he sat in weary dullness.

It was then that the royal vision of his wife made triumphant entry. He saw Ruth smiling—as she would be if he willed it, red lips inviting, every charm more imperative for the frightful emptiness out of which she had risen. Everything in the man, soul and body, leaped to meet her with an insolent demand. He glowed and tingled with the joy of the thought of her. The warmth of her love, the joy of her presence, was so real, so new, somehow, in this new defiance of his spirit, that unconsciously he lowered his eyes uneasily. He realized that for the first time in his life the thought of his own wife had given him a sense of shame. Then his mood changed again, and he was downcast with ominous forecastings of what their life would be if—he still did not admit the question had been settled—if he should condone her sin against him, take her back.

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“What will become of me if I, having lost my belief in her, live with her?” He sank into blank dejection at the thought.

Up and down the scale, from sacrifice to yielding, with the conclusion made but to be broken, he went, over and over, through the whole journey's length. When the train began to slow up, ready to slide into the station at Chicago, he began to gather up his belongings, muttering exhaustedly to himself:

“It wouldn't be decent; it wouldn't be decent.”

But when the car trembled with the almost imperceptible jar of the arrival he turned in a final, defiant protest to the hovering, austere Presence:

“You can't expect me—I won't think it! How can I live if I send her away?”

## CHAPTER VI

WARD had sent a telegram from Chicago that he would be back for the opening of court on the third day. But when Cowperthwaite came into court on that day, although it was already more than comfortably full of spectators, the prosecuting attorney had not yet appeared. Cowperthwaite took his place on the side reserved for the prosecution, and waited.

Criminal Court No. 1 was a large and handsome room. In fact, the whole City Hall was a tribute to the Mayo machine. Those gentlemen must have had a certain amount of civic pride to have allowed so large a proportion of the millions expended to have gone into the structure. One side of the court-room gave on an inner court; two sides were on the street. Except for the front wall, with the judge's imposing, red-canopied chair in the center, the big room seemed all of windows. With the sunlight pouring in from the back, with direct or cross lights everywhere, there was little chance of any criminal finding the darkness a welcome ally.

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The people continued to stream in; in another half-hour the room would be crowded. After this, no one could say that the public was indifferent, passive, to its shame; it was evident that it was aroused to its depths by this effort toward its regeneration. Kenneth Ward had established a reputation for a certain hard-headed driving at an honest purpose that was making him popular as a head-liner in the more independent newspapers. And Cowperthwaite's appointment as associate counsel had just been announced. The merely curious were there also; it was getting to be probable that each day would furnish a sensation. Everywhere there was the subdued hum of conversation, a rustle of expectation. Below the judge's stand, in the pen on the right hand, the clerk of the court, a youth of a light and facetious turn of mind, given to flowing neckties and to magenta socks, had already placed in methodical piles before him the documents that would be needed in the case, humming, meantime, a melody sung by the musical comedy star who, the night before, had tripped over the local boards.

Below the bar of the shining red-wood railing, neither of the lawyers for the defense of Garvin had appeared. On the other side of Cowperthwaite, beyond Ward's empty chair, Wilson,



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Ward's junior, was feverishly cramming the figures that it was his part of the assignment to reel off; Ward himself never cared for the technical part. Cowperthwaite leaned forward to see whether Ken was coming in yet. He was not; and Cowperthwaite settled back, smiling a little ironically to himself to realize that he was awaiting Ken's coming with suspense. The smile, and something fine and subtle in Cowperthwaite's face made of him, had there been any imaginative person there to observe it, a denizen of some other than of our burly "business" century. His was the type that one associates with white curled wigs and lace ruffles and paste buckles.

"Any man might be allowed some curiosity about seeing a friend after a scene like that of the other day," he was thinking. "I suppose it isn't strange, even if he does know I wasn't anything worse than a fool, that I actually feel some embarrassment—think of feeling embarrassed before old Ken! Well, it's luck that we're going to work together; we'll soon get down to rock-bottom again."

In a few minutes Garvin appeared, a little, gray man with an alert and nervous bearing. He was with his counsel, and, from the irritability of frequent glances at his watch, appeared more



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concerned over the loss of his time than the trifling incident that he was on trial for bribery.

A few late-comers were drifting in. With a start of surprise Cowperthwaite saw that Mayo himself had taken a seat just back of Garvin and his counsel. Cowperthwaite had heard a rumor that Mayo had left the city. The Big Man seemed entirely confident.

"He has pluck, of course," thought Cowperthwaite. By Mayo's side was a fair, young slip of a girl. Mayo was not a man to bring his private affairs into the lime-light. Yet, somehow, all the city knew of his devotion to his one, motherless child.

People were beginning to crane their necks reproachfully toward the door that persistently refused to disgorge Ward; the buzz of talking rose higher. It was checked into sudden silence. Cowperthwaite's eyes followed the direction that those of all were taking. With his head down, and shouldering his way blindly through the knot of hangers-on about the door—each one eager for a sign of recognition—Ward had entered the room.

When he was within a few feet of Cowperthwaite he raised his head and saw the man he had allowed to leave his home in the gray light of a morning three days back. Ward halted

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for a perceptible moment. He had forgotten that he would have to find Cowperthwaite beside his chair in court. Then he came steadily on, passed back of Cowperthwaite's seat, where his friend heard a single, hard-drawn breath, and so took his place between Wilson and the new associate counsel.

Every one stirred, and then settled again. Judge Barnard appeared and took his seat under the large and assertively gilt State coat of arms. The bailiff hurried through his nasal "Hear ye, hear ye, this honorable branch of the Criminal Court of Rose County is now in session!" Garvin, who had been biting his finger-nails in nervous impatience, constrained to wait, he who, for so many years, had had men wait for him, sat back. Mayo leaned forward, and directed a brilliantly piercing look at the attorney. For a moment he stood, to see Ward better. Then one saw that Mayo was a big man indeed—big and powerful and fair. His hair, which had been unusually blond in his youth, was almost white now, like his heavy mustache, that belonged to a day when the bucaneer-cavalier type was the model that men aimed for. His clear, blond skin, of a singular delicacy, save for a few golden-brown freckles, was tinged with a wholesome floridness. And his eyes were unexpectedly, brightly blue,

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so clear and shrewd and brilliant that they became easily the dominant expression of his face. The man's fair head, liberally dusted with white, made one think of hoar-frost on ripe fruit; there was something that brought to the imagination inevitably a powerful figure standing in the prow of some adventuring ship, beaten by salt winds and bound for enterprise where only might should prevail.

Ward shook his head impatiently in response to some friendly inquiry of his young assistant. He took his seat with the slightest possible recognition of Cowperthwaite's greeting. Wilson fell back; he was too young to hide that he felt rebuffed.

"The first time he ever failed to be the first in here; it was natural enough to think the train was late or he might be ill. Don't see why he needs to be so short about it!" So Wilson thought, with a sense of injury. But Cowperthwaite smiled, unperturbed; he had expected just such a constrained encounter.

There were the usual routine preliminaries before Lyman's testimony, held over from the last session, was resumed. So, when Ward sat quietly, frowning over the papers in his hand, Cowperthwaite at last had a chance to look at him squarely. The attorney sat with his large

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bulk turned as far as possible away from Cowperthwaite.

A man of Cowperthwaite's type, all-incisive mind and taut-stretched nervous system, without an ounce of superfluous flesh and with no more bulk and muscle than was necessary to equip him for the ordinary physical activities of life, was not apt to show plainly the effect of strain and emotion. So, although the incidents of his unfortunate ride with Mrs. Ward were still in his memory, and he felt to the full the awkwardness of the present situation, the lines of his face presented only a somewhat aloof personality, dominated by an active and temperate mind. He certainly was not abnormally imaginative. Yet, as he looked at Ken, there came to him—apparently from the outside—the thought that he was the spectator of an upheaval of the man's whole moral nature, a reversal of all established forces, so complete that, for an instant, he wondered whether the balance could ever be restored. At one moment he glanced around uneasily, to see whether every one was observing what he did; the next he said to himself, with his usual detached lightness:

“What nonsense! There wasn't anything in what happened to upset Ken this way; it's nothing but that the man has lost some sleep.”

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But, even with the words, Cowperthwaite had returned to his uneasy contemplation: Big man as Ward was physically, he had always carried his height and bulk so buoyantly that one was impressed, not with the fact of weight, but of a force in action. Now his shoulders sagged, and the weariness evident in his bearing made mere bulk more evident; the whole man was something more earthy, almost gross. The abrupt and forceful line of his large, strong features was harsh in the pitilessly clear and pure light that flooded the court-room. The swarthiness of his skin, unrelieved by the ruddy color that was part of the man's vitality, seemed sallow and unwholesome; the white lock tumbled over his forehead amid the wild masses of his hair like a streak of dejection, a signal of surrender; his eyes burned black and somber and unholy. Even Cowperthwaite, detached and impersonal as was his attitude toward other men's moods, even those of a friend, shivered a little before he called his common sense to his aid to dismiss the specter his mind had apparently called up. He told himself that he had exaggerated out of all proportion the mere effect of fatigue and worry on top of weeks of continued nervous strain. But five minutes afterward, in the midst of Wilson's detailed answer to a question he had



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put him, Cowperthwaite's mind reverted to its uneasy questioning about Ken:

"Well, I'm glad I haven't anything worse than sheer idiocy on my conscience," he echoed his own thought of the morning when he had last seen Ken.

Ward beckoned to Wilson, and the attorney and his assistant bent over the papers that had been laid on their desks. It struck Cowperthwaite that he was being rather pointedly ignored; the spectators might get an idea that the members of the prosecution were not in harmony.

"I'll give Ken this Remsen letter," Cowperthwaite thought, looking for it among the letters in his breast pocket. "We will get to talking about that, and that will break the ice." He found the note; it was written on vividly pink note-paper; Remsen had used some belonging to a child at the house where he was in hiding. "Ken," Cowperthwaite said, touching Ward on his aloof, burly shoulder, "you remember, I told you we had a talk with Remsen the other night?"

Ward turned with a start. The face he opposed to Cowperthwaite wore so odd an expression that his friend was puzzled. But the pause before he spoke was barely perceptible, and his voice was under very good control:

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"I remember you mentioned it."

"Well, I hadn't received my appointment then, so I couldn't subpoena him. What an everlasting shame it is things were not brought round a day earlier! But I did get this note from him to you." He gave Ward the sheet of pink paper.

The lawyer scrutinized it; his expression was entirely non-committal. The start of surprise that Cowperthwaite had expected did not follow.

"Where did you get this note?" was all his comment.

"Why, I told you. From Remsen—that night."

There was a grim contraction about Ward's jaw:

"I remembered your—statement, perfectly."

Cowperthwaite was beginning to feel some impatience at Ward's attitude. But he informed himself that he had expected the onus of the affair to be with himself, and made another effort to get back to an easy, friendly footing:

"It can't be used as evidence, of course. It makes your fingers fairly itch to use it, doesn't it? But it may be of some use in getting hold of Remsen later on. Maybe Brown will be able to discover some loop-hole—"



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But Ward was listening with studied impassiveness. And still Cowperthwaite, secure in his belief that his friend's manner was caused only by some natural awkwardness at the recollection of the ugly suspicion that had existed long enough to leave its smudge over their friendship, fatuously persisted:

"That was what Ruth thought. She—"

"Leave my wife's name out of the conversation!" came from Ward like a thunder-clap.

Cowperthwaite drew back, inexpressibly startled at the contempt and fury in Ken's face. Quite naturally he fired up, too:

"Oh, come, Ken, don't be an absolute fool. We finished with that the other morning. I was willing to explain things then because I felt that it was due you. But when you said you were satisfied that ended it. I swear I won't rehearse the melodrama. You ought to be man enough to bury the thing; we certainly have been friends long enough for me to expect that. And I declare, it isn't fair to your wife either—"

"That's enough!" Ward's face was dark and threatening. Cowperthwaite felt him tremble impotently beside him. As Cowperthwaite turned impatiently away, he heard him mutter hoarsely:

"If my hands weren't tied— But of course you know that! I'd like—"

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Some one caught a tone of the choked voice and turned to look at the lawyer curiously. And the instinct of his profession made him able to screw down the clamps of his control. Cowperthwaite heard his laboring breath slowly subsiding into calm. There was another interval, and then Ward rose and asked Judge Barnard to have the witness brought to the stand. His voice was again quiet and steady.

Cowperthwaite, listening intently and scrutinizing the quiet face, felt disquieted and puzzled.

“What on earth has got into Ken?” he wondered. Then a sudden light came to him. “Oh—I have it! They threshed the matter out after I left and Ruth told him what a silly ass I’d been. That’s it! Well—for a sensible woman— Will anybody tell me what was the use of being so blamed conscientious! But that explains the whole thing—I suppose I’d feel exactly the same way. But he needn’t be so particularly unbearable—whew! This *is* going to complicate things for a while. Wonder if I’d better make a clean breast of the whole thing, or just let the matter rest.”

## CHAPTER VII

THE witness who had been held over was Francis Lyman, Mr. Garvin's private secretary. In the absence of Remsen, Lyman, with Garvin and Mayo himself, was probably the only man who could speak from direct knowledge of the transaction whereby a franchise worth a million had been voted to Garvin by Mayo's City Council without any return to the city whatever. On the previous days of the trial it had been proved that, some days subsequent to the gift of the franchise, a check for \$500,000, signed by Richard D. Garvin, had been entered to Mayo's credit at one of his banks. The fact that both men were so careless as to have allowed such a witness against them was evidence of the cynical indifference to public opinion that marked them. It was this check that the prosecution was endeavoring to prove was in the nature of a bribe to Mayo in consideration of his awarding the franchise to Garvin. The Council had been presided over by Mayo at the time of the award. The city accountant and treasurer had been made

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to admit that they could find no record of any return from the franchise credited to the city's revenues. Being of the machine, however, they had attempted to establish that this fact did not prove that no return had been made.

They had brought into court schedules showing an elaborate system of bookkeeping, with which they counted on confusing the heads of the jurymen. There were cleverly doctored pages of figures, from which they argued that the absence of the item from the schedule of any particular date did not prove that the money had not been paid in; it might easily have been entered on some other schedule. They would have succeeded in confusing the issue had Ward not brought the matter out of the haze of conjecture and muddle of figures to show, with conclusive simplicity, that neither at that time nor at any period of the city finances had any such sum existed to the city's credit not otherwise accounted for. All of the complexity of different "schedules" and "entries" had therefore fallen to the ground, and the fact had been established that nothing had been paid to the city, and that a large sum had been paid to Mayo which might, or might not, have been for his influence in assigning the franchise.

Lyman proved an excellent witness. Which

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means, that he apparently satisfied the standards of the spectators. He was clear in his answers, courteous, never lost his temper, even when his veracity was assailed, kept everybody in a good-humor by an occasional sally of what, in the arid air of the court-room, passed for wit, and was preternaturally alert in never admitting anything that could, in the most indirect manner, tend to compromise his principal. He was a tall, well-groomed, gentlemanly young fellow, with excellent clothes, and a pleasant voice, the sort of man that the average business man wanting a clever, honest assistant to train up with an eye to a partnership would have picked. He was the sort of man, too—as was suggested by his unusual popularity in the social set of the business city—that any really far-sighted mother would prefer as a husband for her daughter to many richer men of less exemplary habits.

Yet behind the defense of "I cannot recall," the one statement whose falsity could never be proved against him, it was evident that he perjured himself constantly and with the utmost cheerfulness. Had Lyman been invariably correct in his statements, no secretary with such preternatural ignorance and alarming lapses of memory had ever existed. Yet no one could possibly have doubted, watching the pleasant



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young man's alert gaze, his prudent pause to consider before each statement, that he was probably as admirably equipped for his duties as any street-railroad magnate could have wished.

Ward, whose power over witnesses had been one of the chief qualities that made for success in his career, began his cross-examination with the almost passionate impetus that characterized him. Where he prevailed—and he had rather generally prevailed in this campaign—it was through the power of his personality, the force of his conviction of the justice of the cause he represented, rather than through any excess of subtlety. His legal education had been a thorough one, but when all was said it was the sweep of Ward's moral enthusiasm that had brought about his astonishing success over the brilliant men trained in every legal strategem through years of manipulation of the courts that opposed him.

He had grown to expect just the attitude that Lyman showed. But he seemed to make little headway as he continued to question him:

“I am to understand that you have no knowledge of the negotiations whereby the accused became possessed of a franchise allowing the Urban to extend its route along Avenue Y?”

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"I have no knowledge other than that the franchise is in our possession."

"The negotiations occupied the greater part of six months, did they not?"

"Nearer seven months, I believe," the witness replied, obligingly.

"You must have been present at consultations regarding the franchise, between Mr. Garvin and various members of the company."

"I cannot recall."

"Your office is to stand between Mr. Garvin and the general public, is it not?"

"There was no statement to that effect in our contract," Lyman replied, smartly. A ripple of amusement ran round the court-room. With this sign of the sympathy between himself and the audience, the witness sat a little straighter, and his smile became more assured.

"Am I right in assuming that you usually know with whom Mr. Garvin is in consultation?"

"I would not go so far as to make that statement." Lyman's smile was amiability itself.

"Am I right in stating that this is, in its general features, a plan of the offices of the Urban?" Ward gave the plan to the clerk of the court, who, in turn, humorously passed it to Lyman. The witness examined it for an in-



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stant. With an air of great candor he returned it to the hands of the clerk, saying:

"The plan is in the main accurate."

"Is there any feature in which it is *not* accurate?" Ward demanded.

"My desk is indicated in red ink, and it is built of black walnut."

A shout of enjoyment went up at the exquisite frivolity. Since Ward persisted in being entirely unhumorous he began to lose in popularity.

"Your office, I assume you will not deny, is the second of the suite of three?"

"Certainly." Lyman made a great feature of his concessiveness, but he had a wary eye out for the end of the sequence of questions.

"The first of the series is the only one that has direct communication with the hall?" Ward followed.

Lyman again assented.

"The third room is Mr. Garvin's private office?"

"Yes." Lyman was too watchful to be anything but monosyllabic.

"Is there any way by which a visitor may enter Mr. Garvin's office without your knowledge?"

"I am frequently absent. But at other times,

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unless my attention was very much absorbed, I would probably know."

"Are you frequently absorbed?"

"Frequently; affairs of state, you know." The wave of sympathetic amusement was for the witness's pleasing flippancy.

"Are you frequently absent?"

"It is impossible to make any general statement. That varies with the days."

"Do you recall having seen these gentlemen enter Mr. Garvin's office during the last six months?" Ward read a list of names in rapid succession of men entirely unconnected with the matter in hand. In each case Lyman remembered.

"Mr. Mayo?"

"Not to my knowledge," was the emphatic answer.

"—Gamble—Farnsworth—Foster—" For a number more the witness's memory held good. "Mr. Remsen?" A stir ran round the room, for it was generally known that Remsen was the missing witness who had been spirited away.

"I cannot recall," said Lyman, imperturbably. And so audible was the rustle of sympathetic amusement that the judge threatened to clear the court-room unless order was restored.

Ward smiled too. But the smile was an ugly

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thing. The moral cloud that was over them all was in tune with his own thoughts. "Is anybody honest?" he was wondering.

"Queer thing, this wave of dishonesty that has swept over us all," Cowperthwaite was thinking with his tolerant clearness of vision that was yet far from being either cynicism or bitterness. "Just a temporary phase, I imagine. No more real connection with the temper of the main body of sound, honest men than the thieves and cutthroats that flourished in the picaresque romance of the eighteenth century had with the mass of staid and law-abiding Englishmen. But certainly, at this moment, sympathy seems to be with the smart liar. That fellow is lying, of course—lying to order. Garvin won't take the stand himself, but this fellow has been primed. Honest chap otherwise, I fancy. Would starve genteelly before he'd break through a baker's window and steal a loaf of bread. He justifies himself, I suppose, by saying that his first duty is to his business employer. He is 'standing pat.' Nice, clean chap he looks, too. Rather too bad, I think. I wonder whether he, or Garvin, or Mayo, or any of the other rotten grafters are really responsible, any more than if they had caught the germ of the bubonic plague. Isn't it in the air? I wonder if it isn't the people

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—these people here that applaud perjury—that make the rascals. But I wonder up to what point they will stand for it.”

To Ken Ward no such temperate philosophy was possible. The other day it might have been—not to-day. Then Ruth was on her throne—God in his heaven. Men might lie, but there was Ruth! Ruth with her straight, high standards, her rigorous honesty for herself mingled with her gentleness in judgment of dishonesty, her conviction that “there is a reason for it that we can’t see—no one *wants* to be bad.” The husband could fight, savagely it might be, but straight out from his shoulder, and with pity, not malice, for the chap that fell under the blow. And—since there was Ruth—the passing show of dishonor, of meanness, of cruelty affected him only as something that he was in duty bound to oppose to make the world more fit for Ruth. But now—

The court-room faded. Cowperthwaite, the man who had been his friend, hiding—as Ward thought—under that appearance of every-day cordiality his knowledge of his own treachery. Lyman’s subdued smile at his own cleverness—Garvin—everybody—became submerged in a general moral murkiness, a hateful and squalid mass of corruption. He felt his heart fill with

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utter disgust, wholesale and cynical contempt. All the standards of his life were going down before a flood of bitter contempt for humanity, a loathing for it—and for himself.

The trial proceeded. There was the nagging iteration of Lyman's loss of memory; the amusement of the spectators became almost hysterical as the morning wore on; at every turn the city attorney was balked by, "I don't recall." Something had sapped Ward's confidence in himself; he himself was subtly conscious of his own loss of power. He began to lose his temper. His manner, from being straightforward in its determination, became one of personal antagonism. An overbearing violence was only a confession of defeat. His manner threw the burden of sympathy on Lyman, who bore—surely he could afford to since his was all the advantage—all of Ward's often brutal attacks with a sublime and smiling patience.

Cowperthwaite was often forced to interpose. Unfortunately, the solution that Cowperthwaite thought he had hit upon to explain Ken's strange manner had roused all of Cowperthwaite's ungodly sense of humor. Mistakenly enough, it struck him as being funny that old Ken should be so infuriated at that predatory kiss of his that it was actually affecting his manner to his



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associate, and before the eyes of the open court. So there was an unsubdued mischievous twinkle in his eyes when he met Ken's that roused Ward's sullen anger to almost ungovernable fury. At Cowperthwaite's first interference Ward shot a glance of sheer hatred at him. Later, his professional habit asserted itself and he recovered his calm.

But that one lapse was not lost on the keen-eyed bucaneer who sat just back of Garvin. Mayo was watching the process of justice which to-morrow might be going on with himself, not Garvin, as the accused. Although he could not imagine it possible that any grand jury could be found that would return a true bill to an indictment against him, he realized that the outcome of this trial would be a large factor in determining this. And he had no idea of letting anything escape that might be of use to him later on. The pretty, delicately fair daughter who sat with him showed a forehead strained into a pained and wondering attention. It was the first knowledge that her life had afforded her of the sharp passions of men and the craft with which they might be pursued or defended.

With a sudden effect of flagging purpose Ward turned the witness over to Wilson; the lawyer had the idea that, since it was going to be mani-

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festly impossible for him to work with Cowperthwaite he might so ignore and affront him before the court-room that Cowperthwaite himself might be forced into resigning. Wilson filled up the time with futile cross-questioning that arrived at nothing. The witness felt the lessening of the tension, and weary himself from what, after all, had been a long strain, showed but scant ceremony in answering the questions. Ward sat heavily thinking. Unless he struck some new vein the day was evidently to be an utter loss.

With a smothered exclamation Ward sat forward and began to search hurriedly among the papers on his desk. Something had occurred to him. He found the paper that he sought and studied it at some length. At the close of his scrutiny he still sat, staring straight ahead of him in a brown-study, trying to settle with himself whether he could use the method that had occurred to him. It was a daring scheme to try, and of doubtful propriety.

"I swore to myself I'd fight fair," he thought, darkly, "even if they used every rotten method they could invent to cover up their tracks. But I wonder if you can fight grafters by straight means. What's the use of being finicking nice when they can bowl over every straight argu-



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ment you can put up just by turning another lie?"

Still he hesitated. Up to this moment he had kept his promise to himself, and they had won. Up to this moment every link in the chain of evidence had been forged honestly and had held good. Through police grafter, petty taker of "fines" in the district where sin had raged unchecked so long as it paid good tribute, through Mayo's chief lieutenants, through big buyers of despoiled city privileges like Richard Garvin, they were advancing, undermining, attacking, and then organizing their spoils against him, until they should come to the Big Man himself, the respectable owner of the vaunted "business" government, more dangerous because in all purely personal concerns his life was stainless, and it was therefore difficult to rouse feeling against him—merely because he had corrupted the standards of civic honor so that he could more comfortably choke and rob the city underneath his grasp. Slow and painful as it had been, surely their course had been inevitably toward success. But to-day he had failed. And Cowperthwaite was there to see it. If he lost this case Will Cowperthwaite would hear the judgment given against him. And Cowperthwaite would see him beaten—again—

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Wilson's cross-examination was over. The hour had come for the noon recess. Ward lunched alone. But even when the court assembled again he had not decided what he would do. It was when he met Cowperthwaite's eyes that he decided.

## CHAPTER VIII

“YOUR Honor,” Ward said, rising, “I am willing now to dismiss the witness.”

The movement and stir in the court-room meant that the public generally knew that, in the absence of Remsen, Lyman was the most important witness in the case. His escape, therefore, when nothing of any importance had been extracted from him, was nothing short of a triumph for the defense and for him. Lyman drew in a long breath and began to smile in answer to congratulations that were telegraphed him. The first man whom his eyes sought was Mr. Garvin, who nodded to him with a flush on his usually colorless face.

The attorney waited for the commotion to subside. There was an unpleasant gleam in his eyes:

“I ask permission to introduce some new evidence,” he said when the room was finally quiet, his eyes on the judge. “Something that has only lately been brought to my attention.”

Cowperthwaite had his moment of surprise.

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He thought he knew every detail of Ken's campaign. Every possible witness had been examined save Mayo, whom they had decided it would not be wise to call to the stand, and Remsen, by this time on his way across the Atlantic. Both of the lawyers for the defense were on their feet, protesting. Cowperthwaite felt some indignation that Ward had taken such a step without consulting him; evidently it was going to be no easy thing to work with Ken when he was in this mood. But the judge was speaking.

"The court rules that the attorney for the prosecution may introduce his witness," Judge Barnard was saying while Cowperthwaite thought: "What witness has Ken run up against? I certainly must make him understand that I won't be ignored in this way. He must have been on the chase that night after all— His wondering stopped abruptly. No new witness was making his appearance to be sworn in. Instead of that, Ward had reached for a paper from among those before him. It was note-paper—a vivid pink—

"This is a letter from Remsen," Ward said. A man whom we contend to have been the agent in this transaction." Without pausing a moment he read in breathless haste, while every one was too thunderstruck to interrupt him:

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“Mr. Kenneth Ward, etc.—I am on my way out of the country. Garvin put up the money and I have to do my part of the bargain to get it. But if you can string things along, and if you can make it worth my while, I might come back and testify. But it would have to be big money—”

The court-room was in an uproar. Both of Garvin's attorneys were on their feet, shaking their arms at Judge Barnard. Garvin was livid. The judge's voice for a moment dominated the tumult, but what he said could not be distinguished; it was Ward's strong voice that prevailed: “It will take a cool \$10,000 to make me tell all I know. I went to the Big Man with the boodle—”

Then the defense lawyers' voices were heard. “Object!” one was saying. “Not evidence!” the other was shouting, breathlessly.

“I sustain the objection,” said Judge Barnard, sternly. “The attorney very well knows that this alleged letter is not evidence. It will take very little more for me to commit the attorney for contempt of court.”

Ward sat down, smiling evilly. A mighty protest had risen in him against the system that would lose to the country a case that was morally right because of a legal convention; he had always been stronger on equity than on law.

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That explained his action in some part. But it was also true that he was seized with a lawless passion to win at any cost. What if he had deliberately resorted to a trick! What had the world done to him but betray his trust, trick him! The end was a just one; why be cautious about means? He was fighting an unclean growth that threatened honest men. He had been ridiculously scrupulous before.

"But now I'm going to beat!" he promised himself. "I'm going to beat and show Will Cowperthwaite that I can do it. I suppose he's scandalized. Well, the man he's so keen about fighting is ahead of him on one score, anyway: Mayo never stole his friend's wife; he's clean as they make them about women! The judge can rule against me all he likes. He can put me in contempt—I can fight that later. But the jury heard the letter! I know juries; they won't be able to forget it. Whether it's legal evidence or not, they got the letter. It was a good trick. And I turned it!"

The room still simmered in excitement that seemed unable to subside. Garvin's lawyers had gone up to the bar and were in heated argument with Judge Barnard. Ward, still ignoring Cowperthwaite, sent Wilson up to represent their side, and sat back, waiting.



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Although Ward seemed to have no eye for the onlookers, he had never in his life been so keenly observant. It seemed to him all at once that a man needed to have eyes in the back of his head so that nothing unfriendly should escape him on the part of an unfair and crooked world. His suspicion was rewarded by observing that the glances that were directed at him, admiring, of course—what American does not applaud a successful trick!—had an undercurrent of irony. Yes, he was quite sure he was right in this. So he felt his heart harden against a really friendly nod. Of course there was something treacherous in that, too.

In all the confusion Cowperthwaite had taken no part. He sat quietly, his keen face looking straight ahead. To tell the truth, at the beginning Ken's astounding action had stunned him out of all possibility of action. The ruse was so at variance with the whole course of Ward's life, so opposed to the motives with which both of them had been conducting their fight up to this moment, that for an instant Cowperthwaite wondered if Ken's mind were, somehow, unhinged.

But the stupefaction lasted only for the instant. In the next he turned to Ken. Ward sat, black eyes half glazed in gloomy brooding.

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That was not his friend Ken Ward, whose very heart-beats he could have sworn he knew the measure of. The vague feeling that had already overcome him, that Ken was somehow different from what he had been before, was now a sure conviction. The reason? With impatience Cowperthwaite pushed the speculation away from him. Whatever might be his personal feeling, he had his public duty in the matter. Although Ward had not consulted him—had in fact pointedly ignored him—he still was his associate, equally responsible, with Ward, before the men who had put them both where they were, for the conduct of the case. And he must take action.

Garvin's lawyers had finished their conference with Judge Barnard and were returning to their places. It was evident that they had not had the satisfaction that they sought, for their faces were gloomy and indignant.

"Barnard ought to throw the whole thing out," Cowperthwaite thought, dispassionately. "He would have a perfect right to take it from the jury. I thought Barnard was a good deal of a man—I've got to do something. Ken will think any action against him is treachery, but I can't stand for this."

The buzz of conversation that arose from every

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part of the court-room was silenced as Cowperthwaite rose to his feet.

"Your Honor," he said, in his even voice, "as associate counsel in this contention I have a statement to make. It is due to myself and to the integrity of the prosecution to say that the introduction of this letter is without my consent or knowledge. I have not been consulted by my associate in this matter. Had I been consulted I should have protested against such methods. I most emphatically disapprove of the action of the prosecuting attorney."

There was a hushed silence throughout the court-room. As Cowperthwaite seated himself again he met Ward's eyes. This time Ken faced him squarely. He sent his friend a straight challenge of implacable hate. Cowperthwaite returned it with a calm that had in it his usual disconcerting tinge of humor. But Judge Barnard was speaking; there was no time for private feud.

They listened breathlessly. In that they were one with the whole concourse. With the first words it was evident that the judge was taking a firm stand that no one had quite expected of him. Because of Ward's unjustifiable action, in introducing matter that was not testimony, Judge Barnard had taken the case from the

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jury. Jury, principals, counsel, and witnesses were dismissed. Almost with his last words the judge had left the court-room, leaving Ward on his feet indignantly protesting. All of the work of weeks had been 'as nothing. The Garvin case was as if it had not been!

## CHAPTER IX

**M**OST of the spectators had melted away. Groups of those who had lingered to discuss the situation were here and there. The largest group, of course, was the one that had gathered around Garvin and Mayo. Several men that were identified with large business interests of the city were there, plainly relieved at the outcome. Lyman had joined them and was being congratulated with much facetiousness, Garvin was flushed and jocular, Mayo and the lawyers cheerful and anecdotal.

“It’s just an act in the comedy,” Mayo was saying to Garvin. “Of course they’ll go after me next. This is the time of the Righteousness play, you know. But there is always the sacred right of appeal.” They all laughed. “If they get any jury to return a true bill against me I think I know where to get a wedge in. That fellow Ward hates Cowperthwaite like a good one. Never noticed it before, but I caught the look Ward gave him. That’s the point of at-

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tack. Law be hanged. It's the personal thing that tells every time."

He went back to his daughter, who was wondering rather dismayedly why her father seemed to be so friendly with a man who had just been accused of such awful-sounding things. Helping his "little girl" on with her girlishly trim and dainty white-serge jacket the Big Man left the room.

Cowperthwaite had slipped out some time before, thinking that the place was not a particularly good one for an encounter with Ken. Ward had fallen into a black and brooding dejection. He gathered up his papers and put them into their case, either ignoring or responding by a nod of the curtest to the occasional greeting that came his way. A good many people craned for a glimpse of him. Garvin's chief counsel, on his way to the clerk's desk, waved him a jocular salutation.

"What does Cowperthwaite mean by throwing the whole thing out—damn him!" he thought, savagely. "An out and out traitor! Judge Barnard would never have plucked up spirit to take the case from the jury if it hadn't been for Cowperthwaite's grand-stand play. Now we'll have to begin the grind all over again. What a farce the human show is, anyway!" Ward



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plunged out of the room and was in the full tide of the street current when he took up his bitter thoughts again. "One set of scavenger ants sitting up in judgment of another set because the first happens to feed a little more directly upon the corruption that in one way or another gives us all our food!"

Ugly as his thoughts were, instinctively he clung to even their support. For he was nearing home—where Ruth was.

He hadn't written to her since he had left for Chicago; he had merely telephoned when he got in that morning. He wouldn't have been going home then if his common sense had not told him that things had to be taken up again somehow, and the longer he delayed the more difficult the task would be.

"I've got to think it out somehow," he thought. But as often as he tried to imagine what their meeting would be like his bruised mind failed to register any picture.

It was not until he drew out his latch-key to open the door that he had any consecutive thought. Then it was to caution himself.

"Now see here," he said to the snarling dog that crouched low within him. "No half-way measures. If you have made up your mind to condone it"—a wave of sick loathing swept over

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

him at his own word whispered to his own sick soul—"don't let's have any grudging. I won't stand a single allusion to it. It's done and finished. Do a whole day's work!"

Yet with the opening of the door there seemed at first so little to contend with. Instead a breath like incense that swept out to meet him and meant home. For an instant its old influence was upon him; every pulse was quickened and yet steadied. Then misery, heavier for its momentary withdrawal, surged back upon him laden with all the drift and uncleanness of the bitter sea.

In the hall he fixed his mind on the near externals. He was very careful how he hung up his hat.

"What is it she has contrived to do with the house?" he wondered, pulling off his gloves. "It's the usual commonplace narrow arrangement. We have had little enough money to put into it, Heaven knows. There she's independent enough. Ruth has never cared about money. It certainly was not that way, through love of luxury, she has proved—vulnerable—"

He pulled himself together. This was not the promise he had made to himself. Couldn't he follow out a train of ordinary impersonal thought without ending up there?

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“What’s the charm of the house?” he speculated, determinedly. The rooms were simple enough; just the absolutely necessary chairs, the settee, and a stand or two. The piano—to be sure that was a good one. Music was one of Ward’s minor passions. If he hadn’t been so busy he would have given a good deal of time to it. He even composed a little—rather wild, haunting snatches of melodies. The walls were of the simplest—one tone throughout. But the pictures—well, that was Ruth’s hobby. Still, there were very few—only hung just right. The draperies somehow caught up just the right note of the walls, the furniture tapestries were perhaps a note or two higher in the scale, and the rugs a trifle lower. But she had somehow put a sense of space and airiness into everything. And every chair a nook for a friend to be comfortable in. The lamps just right for reading or casting a glow to bring into added beauty some picture that widened the city constraint with a glimpse of spring skies or harvest fields.

Ruth came down the stairs humming.

“How curious!” he thought to himself. Then he caught the quaver in her voice and recognized the effort. That was the worst of this deadly domestic setting for a tragedy; you knew so well the woman’s every mood. The knowledge

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had added power to hurt you because the learning of it had been with love, not hate.

He glanced at her, forcing the steadiness of the look. He did not kiss her. She wore a gown that he liked. He knew them all; there were so few of them. She didn't usually wear this one except for something festive.

"Is she planning to go to the theater?" he wondered. Then his heart contracted. The pretty frock meant that she wanted to please him. Something like hatred rose in him at the thought. But he forced it down, saying to himself, with grim honesty, that he would probably have been even more angry had she been carelessly dressed and negligent. That would have meant something to him more damning still.

He started up-stairs and she made a motion to go with him. But some undefined constraint seized her and she stayed below. Every step that he took up-stairs without her hurt her.

Ward made short work with his dressing. It was often rather a lengthy process, for Ruth hovered companionably around and told him everything that had happened, while he struggled with his tie or made intermittent play with his hair-brushes. Sometimes she mussed his hair all up after he had brushed it, trying ways to hide the white lock which bothered her. 'Then

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

he had to brush it all over again and it took time. He commented in his own mind on her staying down-stairs. And again he admitted that had she done otherwise it would have been worse. But he hadn't decided what he was going to do.

The dinner was quickly over. It was admirable, too, with the soup he especially liked and that salad that the cook couldn't make. That meant that Ruth had taken the time herself. The old phrase about the way to a man's heart being through his stomach occurred to him. She was trying to propitiate in good earnest. "Nothing like the tender devotion of a woman with something to expiate"—the cynical words of some tainted club-man floated into his mind from some dusty corner.

"No, things went pretty badly to-day," he was admitting to her, with a latent pleasure in detailing something disastrous. "It was Cowperthwaite's fault. It's going to kill our side, having him brought into the case. He took a stand to-day in direct opposition to me; played traitor just to pose as a superior being. But all the same I stole a march on him." For the moment he had spoken of Cowperthwaite with unconsciousness. But the red that flew into her cheeks showed that the thought had been with her



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waiting. That knowledge put grim enjoyment into his manner as he told her of his cleverness.

She looked a little aghast when the full force of it dawned upon her.

"But—" she started to protest.

He knew just the way she would look at it. Of course she would think Cowperthwaite right, not him. Hatred of the man climbed its monotonous way into his heart again and sank into its accustomed impotence. He noticed, with a cruel relish of her confusion, that she dropped the subject and sat with her eyes unhappily on the table. He went on with lingering pleasure to tell her the text of Remsen's letter.

"I had supposed you would wait," she broke in, eagerly. "Not use the letter now, but see if you couldn't get hold of Remsen for the Mayo trial later."

That was absolutely the right and reasonable course of action; he knew that perfectly well. He had often used Ruth's suggestions to advantage. But nothing that she could say now seemed to have any weight with him.

"That's just like a woman's idea of business," he overrode her opinion, roughly. Of course, too, it was part of her defense to pretend earlier knowledge of the letter. The dinner dragged to its unhappy end.



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There had been times when Ruth had looked at him with a sort of dawning wonder.

“Ken is taking it worse than I had supposed he would,” she thought. Being an honest woman, with a conscience that was normally active, she had prepared herself to expect that her husband would come home to her in some such mood. The fear of it had made the days they had been parted very unhappy. “They say a man can’t love without being capable of jealousy,” she admitted that. “But how can any one feel that kind of jealousy and still have faith? Would I feel that way about Ken?” She let her mind dwell on the subject and was rewarded by feeling quite the proper warmth of indignation at the mere idea of some mythical woman daring to assume she had the right to entertain a tender sentiment for Ken. That quite cheered Ruth. She would feel almost that way about Ken.

But occasionally, as she caught an under-current of contempt in his carefully controlled and ceremoniously polite utterance, she wondered if he were not making almost too much of even that provocation. “I didn’t think he would punish me quite so hard.” Her imagination had not gone beyond some irritation that could be cured by the unfailing argument of her cheek

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on his. But it was with the beginnings of terror that she realized how impossible it would be to come a step nearer to this strange, new, sardonic man.

Just once she got up her courage to allude directly to the incident that lay between them. It was before they had turned up the lights in the study. For an instant she felt near to him and comfortable. So much so that she took hold of the lapel of his coat.

"Ken," she began. Then she knew that she was really miles away from him. So she dropped his coat and stood quiet and alone, her arms straight at her sides. "Don't ever—please—speak to me about that—matter—with Mr. Cowperthwaite. I feel horribly about it. I shall never quite forgive myself. It hurts me so to think about it when I am alone. I wanted you to know all about it, but I think we would both be happier if we could forget it now. I don't believe I could bear it if you ever spoke of it. You see, a woman has—a sort of burning shame about such a thing. Do please let's both try to forget it. And don't ever talk to me about it again. Will you promise?"

He nodded dumbly. His heart was too full of the wretched irony of it to speak.

"Good Lord!" he groaned to himself, "what

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are women made of? Has she no moral nature? And I set her up to be my conscience! What kind of a world is this, anyhow? She would be less horribly shameless if she were frankly cynical about it, more of a—business woman like—the creatures of the street!”

Then he reproached himself: “In ordinary kindness, sympathy is the feeling I ought to have for her. I ought to pity her. If she has sinned she must be suffering.” But he couldn't. His hatred rose again. It was for the other women he could have sympathy.

It seemed to him that his heart must have given way under the pressure of his agony. While he was thinking he could endure nothing more it grew blessedly numb. He could feel nothing more. The idea dropped from him that he had anything necessary to decide.

He waited until he was quite sure something had put an end to the aching. Then he smiled at her almost naturally and said:

“I understand. We won't talk about it.”

They had settled down to one of their accustomed evenings. Ruth had not yet had time to get off the last set of letters he had marked for her. He was able to recognize the one he had wanted manifolded the other evening with-

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out a shiver. Ward was even a little amused at Ruth's evident impression that she was of appreciable use to him; he had rather a pleasant glow of masculine superiority as he made the decision that there had been a little too much of that. He congratulated himself that at last he was going to have peace. Soon the typewriter was clicking busily. The cheerful glow of the lamps lighted both him and her. He looked around the familiar room with a surprising sense of well-being. Then he bent busily over his desk. There must be nothing that could disturb it, this dear-bought peace. Why was it that some insistent voice kept hammering at him with the phrase, "Dishonorable peace, dishonorable peace"?

For a few minutes he really worked. He had brought home an accumulation of mail to be gone over. He read some of the letters—with this change in program there would be an oppressive amount of correspondence. Two Ruth could answer for him—that one must go to Wilson—his branch of the work. This one he must take care of himself.

He opened another letter, but he couldn't fix his attention on it. His thoughts wandered. His hands fell heavily on the paper. His eyes looked straight ahead.

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So he sat for perhaps an hour. His wife, busy with her routine work, didn't notice that the papers before him never changed.

The room was a blur, the papers were like fallen leaves of thought before him. He was brooding over them, passive, but with a misty sense of loss, too vague to be a feeling, too real to be banished. In the shadow world where he hung there was no feeling. But there was an insistent voice muttering that somewhere there was discord. He fingered the papers absently like a musician hunting for a chord.

The thoughts that he usually lived with came floating up before him. Were they notes of a score or were they thoughts that he had known? Each one as it swam up was in vague discord—shreds and tags of life—remembered friendships—familiar ideals—dreams of action—his mother—truth—all without form or sequence, all troubled, all discordant. Like a flash of blinding revelation it came to him what was the matter. They stood still on the gigantic score before him. They were all out of key, the notes of the spoiled composition. *They were pitched too high for Ruth. The score could not be sung!*

In a fever he went to work to change them as they drifted once more before him, each note too high, with Ruth fallen, to make life livable,



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each one so eager to be pulled down. "Truth." What childish nonsense! No truth is absolute; expediency's the thing. "Honor." It could not be thought that Ruth was not as high as any woman living, so pull the others down. Honor is purely a matter of circumstances. If any man is challenged at his breaking-point he must go down. "Love!" When that floated to him his soul cried aloud. But he pulled that down, too. "Love"—what was it but sex attraction? *Source, since flesh is base of all, of everything we call virtue when it runs with the tide. But when the wind is counter to the current, the brewer of all the storms of hell.* "Tenderness"—what sickly sentiment to credit it! What is it but the pleasant ease of satisfied desire? "Sacrifice"—nothing but a subtler form of selfishness.

So—*now* for Ruth. Her tone is perfect! She is no more guilty than if she had not fallen. She too belongs to Nature. It's Nature's blame. Ruth was subjected to an attraction too overwhelming for the moment to resist!

When he had quite finished his grim task of transposing he drew a long breath and looked around the room. The light was pleasant. He had a glorious sense of resting when his work was done. His eyes sought Ruth. She met them smiling. When she saw the warm light in his



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eyes in place of what had been there she rose and came to him.

She smoothed back the white lock as she had always done, and just as he always did he caught her hand and kissed it. He pulled her down on the arm of his chair. She was so happy to find his anger over that her eyes were full of magic. Her red lips smiled. She was of the beauty of an enchantress in a Mohammedan paradise. And yet her happiness was that of a forgiven child.

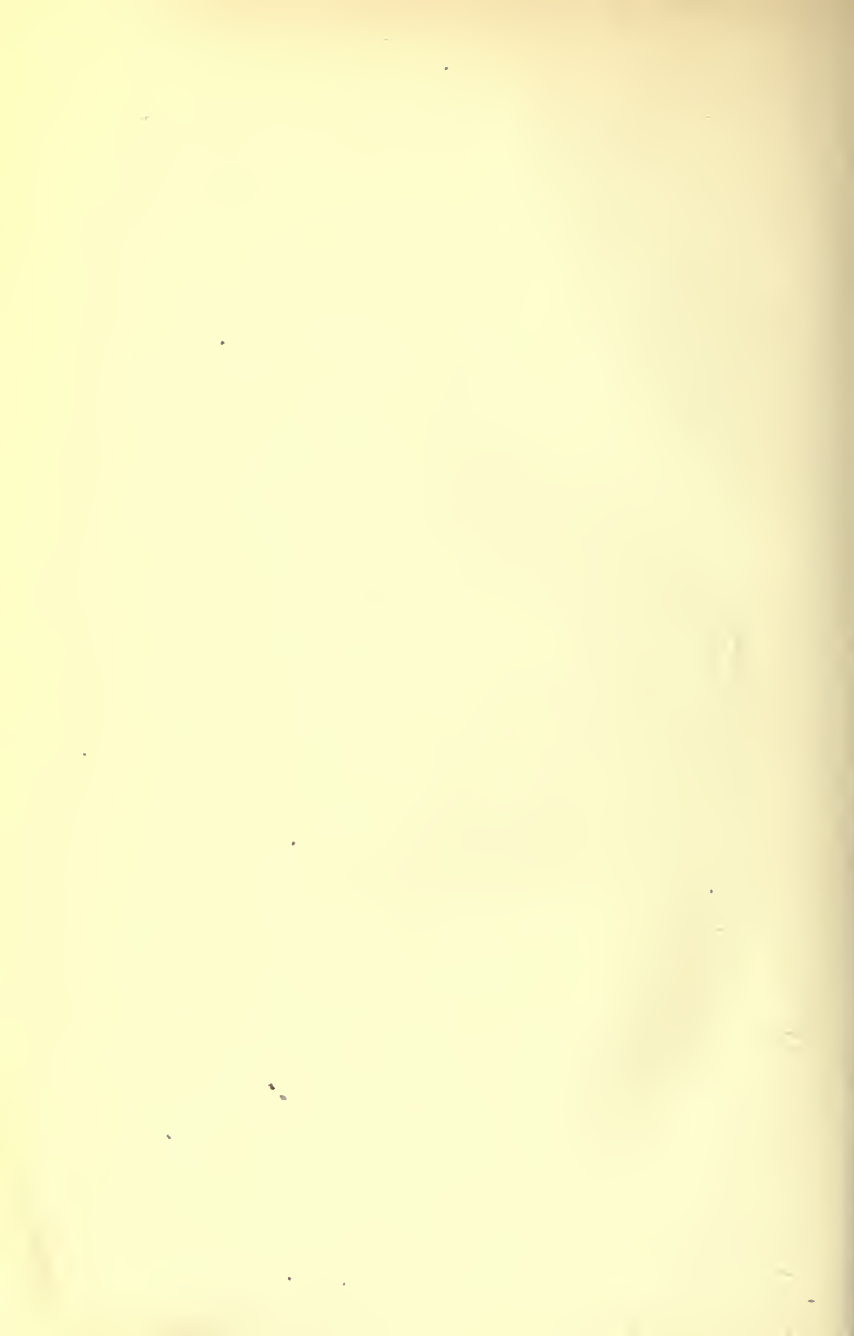
There was this thing that Ruth had to contend with. Whatever might be the source of the light that sparkled in her, it infallibly translated itself into terms of lovely flesh. Her soft hands might spend their strength in deeds of loving service. But when one looked, one saw that they were plump and white and dimpled, with rosy palms that melted into arms of rounded curves. Her joy might be all of purest spirit. But when it made her laugh, to a man she was only Nature's snare. So now, when her whole soul was tenderness, her husband saw creamy skin, blue eyes, and warm, red hair.

Still life had been sweet and fair to Ruth. She was used to have her best thoughts meet their sudden death in kisses. She laughed again for pure joy of loving. What did it matter if



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLA G G

JUST AS HE ALWAYS DID HE CAUGHT HER HAND AND KISSED IT



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the arms were rough, since they were Ken's arms?

The evening had waned. "Come," said Ken. This time they shut the door together.

When they turned to the staircase some mis-giving seized her and she hung back. But his arm around her drew her closer so her head fell on his shoulder. They climbed the steps. What was mere instinct against the fever of her longing to be at peace with Ken? Still, with the first step, she felt that she had trodden on something that had been most dear to her and left it bruised, gagged, and helpless there below.

## CHAPTER X

MAYO hooked his cane into the back of the chauffeur's collar. The car stopped instantly. The Big Man, having found that this was the quickest way to insure prompt attention, had learned just the angle at which he had to lean out beyond the dust-screen to do it; and, after some self-respecting protest, each of the motor experts conceded that it was "the old man's way."

To his daughter Mayo said:

"Drive around the park a few times, girly. You can pick me up at the tool-house." Then, in spite of some haste, he stopped to pinch her smooth cheek. "I think you may run into Lyman. He asked me at what time we would drive."

The girl, one reproachful eye on the chauffeur's back and mindful of the dignity of twenty, began to protest her entire indifference. But already Mayo had plunged through a bit of shrubbery.

On the other side of the shrubbery Mayo kept in sight the man his keen eye had distinguished,

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in spite of the soft evening shadows. The almost unbearable burst of early spring heat had brought out swarms of people. Progress was interrupted by salutations, half shy, half confident, on the part of many a day-laborer who recognized the Big Man from frequent visits to the ward. The very fact that the parks had become real recreation centers for the slum-bound was due to him.

He had thrown himself into the project with as much grim determination as he displayed in pushing some measure through the Council that was to fill his own pockets. He had, in fact, gone down deep into his own pockets to complete the undertaking. And he had carried through the whole big enterprise, while the various philanthropic organizations were still appointing committees to look into the matter.

It was Cowperthwaite with whom Mayo finally caught up. Some time before he accosted him, however, Mayo slackened his pace so that when he greeted his quarry it could be with a casual air. He also assured himself that no possible witnesses were in sight. These concessions to diplomacy made, there was no more beating about the bush.

“I have received information that you fellows intend indicting me.”



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Cowperthwaite admitted pleasantly that that might be true.

Mayo paused a moment to be sure he had the best method of approach.

"I want to congratulate you on the stand you took in the Garvin case last week. It happened to be helpful to us, but I appreciate your attitude apart from that. Ward's action was pretty sharp practice. If any of our lawyers had stooped to such methods wouldn't there have been a howl!"

He laughed heartily, quite undeterred by the fact that Cowperthwaite's face was merely placid. The next moment he was serious again.

"I must admit I was surprised in Ward," he said, with a probing glance at Cowperthwaite. "He had struck me as being an honest, forceful fellow. I never saw him use anything but high-class methods before—personally I dislike having to use any other kind myself. Moreover, it struck me that his manner showed some animosity toward you. I had always supposed you two were pretty close together." He studied Cowperthwaite's quiet profile with his bright blue eyes. There was a whole list of questions hidden underneath what he said.

"Ward was clearly out of order," was Cowperthwaite's only comment.

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Mayo was becoming impatient. Finesse was not his chief accomplishment. He was accustomed to dealing with men who knew a business opportunity when they saw it. Cowperthwaite, of course, must be like all the rest. It was merely a question of finding what the stake was he was playing for. It was probably—no, it would be better not to make an offer of money.

“Absurd to have to beat about the bush,” he thought, contemptuously. “Money, position, or power—they all amount to the same thing in the end; each is an avenue leading to the others. It’s mere squeamishness to quibble about the end at which you happen to enter the maze. But I suppose I’ve got to play this fellow for something lofty. ‘Broader field where he can have greater opportunity for good,’ that’s his bait, I’ll wager. I thought perhaps I could get at him through some grudge against Ward. But he’s too cool about that. I’m not so sure about Ward, though—”

“What career are you aiming for, Cowperthwaite?” he asked, turning abruptly toward the other man.

“I haven’t made my plans.” Cowperthwaite was smiling slightly. “It’s good of you to be interested. But I really haven’t looked much beyond this campaign.” He turned and looked

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

Mayo directly in the face. "I confess I am rather interested in the outcome of this."

Mayo liked the straight look. He always preferred dealing with men whose eyes didn't flinch.

"What's your interest in this Righteousness play?" he demanded, bluntly, as he turned into a secluded alley between avenues of trees.

Cowperthwaite was slapping various pockets in the effort to locate a cigar-case.

"A theory," he replied, laconically.

"You don't look like a piffing theorist. You look like a man who would want results."

"Well, are we not getting them?" Cowperthwaite's smile was a broad one this time.

Mayo acknowledged the thrust.

"Oh, for the moment," he said, good-naturedly. "You've got us on the run, of course. But it won't last, you know. Ward was only smuggled in because I got careless and didn't bother about it. "But you are all on the wrong side of the proposition, all the same. The way I've run it is the only way a modern city government can be run. The men who take the trouble to see that the city is cleaned and lighted and paved, and that vice is kept within reasonable bounds, and do all your dirty work for you by the most approved modern methods, have got to pay

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themselves if you don't pay them enough to make it worth their while—”

“The divine right of graft?” Cowperthwaite put in.

“All this howling about graft is nonsense.” Mayo turned on him. “The complex life of a city can't exist without business methods. A pretty mess your saintly theorists would make of it. They'd go home with a moral nausea after mincing around one day on the surface of Ward Eighteen. You must admit the reformer's job is a pretty easy one. Statistics always shout for the latest manipulator. I've saved millions to the city treasury and I have made ours a clean city and a well-lighted one—and that last has a more Christianizing effect than having the babies learn their letters from the Decalogue. It's safe now for your girl and even your boy to walk down-town. I tell you a one-man power can do as much in a day as your cumbersome 'representative' government can put through in a year.”

“I can't say”—Cowperthwaite cut off the end of a cigar rather deliberately—“that I feel our business methods are of quite the order to be taken as a standard.”

“Maybe not,” said the other man, with a shrug. “But they are the standard of the day,”

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all the same. And to be effective you've got to work with the current, not against it. If you accomplish big things the method doesn't count."

"That's where we differ," said Cowperthwaite, quickly. "The whole stream's tainted if the source is corrupted."

"That's another thing you chaps abound in—figures of speech." The Big Man dismissed the subject impatiently. "But, to get back to solid ground, if my case does come up, it might be possible for you to arrange matters so the case might be dismissed. And if you prove yourself a friend, whatever you ultimately work for, Supreme Court or corporation practice, I have connections pretty much everywhere and would be able to help a friend."

The shamelessness of the bid, coupled with the queer impression of honesty that the man made on him, amused Cowperthwaite, and he laughed outright.

"By the time I get within a hundred miles of the Supreme Court in Washington, Mr. Mayo," he said, with the utmost friendliness, "I will probably have had the misfortune to facilitate the progress of you and your friends toward the State penitentiary. In that event I cannot flatter myself that the peculiar charm I seem to have exerted over you will hold."



## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

Mayo showed all his strong, white teeth in an uproarious laugh.

"You needn't worry about me, my young friend," he chuckled, finally. "By the agreeable clemency of our judicial system we have several years at our command, you know; several years and several judges and divers lawyers and juries. As I said before, the honest and indignant citizen is peculiarly susceptible to fatigue. It's the wicked man, like myself, that always sees the sun go down on his labor. But I didn't much think I could do anything with you. I'll have to have a talk with Ward."

Cowperthwaite was really startled for the moment at the cold-blooded cynicism of such an announcement.

"You'll never get Ward," he said, quickly. "He's straight as a string."

"The trick he tried the other day was a little inconsistent, wasn't it, with the high-brow methods you Civic Club chaps are adopting?" Mayo's eyes were on Cowperthwaite. "What's the quarrel between you, anyway?" he demanded, with his disconcerting unexpectedness. "He looked as if he could have knocked you down with pleasure."

Cowperthwaite kept his face tranquilly non-committal.



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"I fancied myself that he wasn't quite himself that day. A temperamental chap like that is bound to be subject to moods. Perhaps something had gone wrong—hadn't slept much or something." His own words conjured up the episode of over a week ago. And the mischievous devil that abode somewhere in Cowperthwaite without often getting an airing popped out at that moment and lighted up his gray eyes with a gleam of amused daring. "Had some disagreement with his wife, perhaps," he finished, demurely.

The Big Man saw it, of course. It was his business to see everything. But he shut the firm mouth that could keep secrets and said only:

"Very likely."

They had made the rounds of the park, teeming with hard-worked, heat-worn mothers with sleepy babies and with boisterous youngsters as yet unsubdued by privation. Mayo looked up and saw that they were at the point where he had told Claire to meet him. At the thought of her his heart softened into almost foolish fondness.

"She ought to be back," he muttered. And then he saw the car slipping noiselessly and slowly along while Claire kept an anxious lookout for him. Mayo could not repress a fond chuckle.

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“There’s my little girl looking for me. You can see by her face that she isn’t sure I haven’t been kidnapped. She thinks I’m barely able to toddle.” Then he added in a growl, for he wasn’t sure what made him give his unaccustomed confidence to this man who was avowedly his opponent: “Funny—the more delicate and tender, the more to be cherished and protected a girl-child is, the more she’s got that heavenly craving in her to fondle and protect the one that’s dear. You see her—her mother left me to her. That’s what women are like—the right ones.”

The man’s deep tone moved Cowperthwaite. He hesitated irresolutely, telling himself that the proper thing to do, since in a short time he would have to fight the old bucaneer, was to take himself off. At that point the girl gave a cry, “There’s father!” and the machine stopped at the curb opposite them. Cowperthwaite looked up, interested to see the “little girl” of whom the Big Man spoke so tenderly. A vague, harmonious impression remained with him from the glimpse of her that day in court. Then he observed that Lyman was with her. With his foot on the running-board of the motor Mayo hesitated and turned back. He drew Cowperthwaite away a pace or two, his hand on the lawyer’s arm.

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"I'd be glad if you'd bear that matter in mind," he said, almost as if against his will. "You see, I don't care much about the verdict myself; I'll get it overruled quick enough if it's against me. But—my little girl"—Mayo's voice faltered momentarily from its crisp directness—"doesn't understand business, of course. It might hurt her to think any one could disapprove of her dad."

Before Cowperthwaite could reply Mayo had swung himself up into the seat beside the chauffeur.

As the motor rolled away Cowperthwaite stood on the sidewalk, his hat still raised; he had the indistinct sensation that something infinitely sweet and innocent was passing. Mayo, suddenly glancing back, caught the emotion on his face vanishing like the afterglow, but still full of meaning. The Big Man gave one quick look at his daughter.

"Might there be—? he certainly—" Mayo wondered. Then he shut his mind softly against the thought. His daughter could never be a pawn in the game. Her place was higher and withdrawn.

## CHAPTER XI

**D**URING the two weeks before the Mayo case came up for trial Ward had his moments of discouragement. For precaution they had sworn out several indictments against Mayo, one of them the Garvin case in a new form; but the one they were to try first was the charge of having sold a contract for street-paving.

As has been said, Ward's special talent was his power over witnesses. He either succeeded in gaining the confidence of the men or in dominating their wills; until the very man who had gone into the trial, committed to lie intelligently for the defense, found, often to his great disgust, that he had proved an excellent witness for the prosecution. Ward's success had finally grown to be a tradition, and a witness often went to the stand self-hypnotized into the belief that sooner or later the prosecuting attorney would get from him all he knew.

But this set was proving somewhat obdurate. Ward, too, had his superstition. That was that unless he got hold of witnesses outside of court he

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could do nothing with them on the stand. Therefore his own belief in his success, one of the strongest factors in it, was shaken. He woke two days before the trial in a sullen temper which would have meant with another man shaken nerves. He hadn't been sleeping well lately. He was surly with Ruth at the breakfast-table. She seemed to irritate him. It was the moment at which most men would have found a "bracer" imperatively necessary. But Ward had never found that sort of thing a temptation. He was too seasoned by his years of roughing it to go to pieces physically. To be sure, he was drinking a quantity of strong coffee. But that seemed to have no more effect on the crude force of the man than so much water.

When Ward reached his office that 20th of May, his admirably enduring young assistant reported that one Samuel Holding was being detained there for him to interview. Holding was the foreman of Brice, the paving contractor in the case they were to try. Before Brown sailed he thought he had unearthed a clue that pointed to Holding having had something to do with the financial transactions between Brice and Mayo. It is certain that Holding was making arrangements to leave the city when the subpoena was served.

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Holding was a fine, big brute of a man, strong red in his cheeks, and coarse, black hair. Accustomed to a rough sort of authority over the men of his working squads, he did not take kindly to even the nominal degree of deference demanded.

He had been instructed to be deferential to Ward and he held to a sort of civility throughout the interview. Unlike Lyman, he did not betray quite such elaborate forgetfulness. Ward succeeded in getting from him a good deal of information on anything that did not bear directly upon the subject of the indictment; indirect evidence it was, since it revealed some of the questionable business methods of Brice's paving company. But since these points were of secondary importance Ward spent very little time on them. Brown had discovered that Holding had often gone directly between Brice and Mayo. In the absence of any check or money-order that would cover so large a transaction, the inference was that the price of the deal had been given directly to Mayo in the form of currency.

They hoped to prove that Holding was the man who had carried the money. Ward roused himself from the lethargy with which he had begun the day. He assumed from the first that Holding had been the agent.

It was over men of Holding's type that Ward



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had most influence. Something in his own elemental force carried authority with it, where with a more subtle mind he might be often at a loss. So he began his examination with all the confidence in the world.

Following some preliminary queries, to which Holding made just the answers which were to be expected, denying all knowledge of the transaction in question, Ward demanded of him a detailed account of his actions from the time he reported for duty on the fifteenth of November until he knocked off work and went home.

With an air of some enjoyment Holding began a verbose and unbearably detailed recital of a day filled, according to his account, with an incredible amount of activity varied by an inordinate number of beers. Ward listened patiently and then started him on the sixteenth, interrupting his story now and then to put some sudden question to him which attacked from a new angle his statement that he was entirely ignorant of any money paid by his chief to the Big Man. But Holding, unduly familiar and jocular, or covertly insolent, revealed nothing.

It was after he had started the man on the narrative of the seventeenth day that Ward, irritatedly conscious that his morning was being taken up to no purpose, suddenly had an in-

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spiration. An eminently "safe" method of conveying graft which had been used in another city and exposed in the papers at the time came into his mind. Evidences had not been lacking that the Machine in his own city had kept strictly up to the most modern and improved methods in all of its operations. In the midst of Holding's story of an interview with his boss to receive instructions Ward interrupted him:

"What route did you follow back to Green Street?"—the street where paving was being done that day.

Holding glibly recited the usual route.

"When did you get time to go to Baker Street?" This was where the largest safe-deposit company in the city was located. It was a random shot, but it told. Holding for a moment was plainly disconcerted. Before he answered Ward followed it up:

"What was the number of the safe-deposit box in which you had been instructed to leave the money your chief had intrusted to you?"

By this time Holding had recovered his self-possession. He denied having stopped at the safe-deposit company and denied all knowledge of any box there.

"If you testify to a falsehood under oath we will have you up for perjury," Ward said,

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severely. But the man turned surly and for the next few questions was obstinately ignorant. From whatever quarter the lawyer attacked him the result was the same.

Perhaps it would be better to wait until he could find out whether he could get a record of the transaction. On the other hand, he didn't want Holding to get out of his hands. Some one at the safe-deposit might, moreover, be able to identify Holding. What would be the best method to break down the man's determination and get him to admit the share he had in the matter?

"A little solitude may help," he thought, grimly.

A ring brought his office-boy.

"Ask Mr. Wilson to come here," he said, while Holding looked at him furtively, wondering what the lawyer had "up his sleeve."

"Take Mr. Holding into the next room and see that he is alone there," he said, quietly. "I want him to have a period in which he can refresh his memory of a certain transaction. You can bring him back in a quarter of an hour." His confidence was rising. He began to feel that, after a time of suspense, he would be able to get hold of his witness. And he was certain that meant the success of the case.

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“Do you want me to put the screws on a bit?” Wilson said, lingering. He realized that the city attorney was in a better humor than he had been and reflected the knowledge in his own brighter manner.

Ward shook his head and Wilson ushered Holding out of the room. For a few minutes Ward thought hard. The papers relating to Holding and his possible relation to Mayo's case were spread out before him. He went over and over them, looking for a possible new avenue from which he could startle Holding into the admission he wanted. He called up the safe-deposit people over the 'phone. The clerk who had this matter in charge was away. Ward left a message for him to call him up as soon as he got back. He refreshed his recollection of the streets Holding would have to traverse from Brice's office to the safe-deposit company; he figured out the lapse of time.

For the first minutes his mind worked like clockwork. Then for another interval he knew the thought of Ruth was coming back and fought desperately to keep himself from it. But it was to no avail. Back it all swept—the flood of misery, of shame, benumbing his mind, paralyzing his will, undermining the foundations of his belief in the efficacy of right action, of any action.

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He was trembling with the shock of it when Wilson brought Holding again into the room. At first Ward looked at him unseeingly, not comprehending. His own agony obsessed him. Then he remembered. He raised his head and looked at the man questioningly.

Holding was a fine, forceful male. One could see there would be no hesitation there to fight for those things that he considered essential to his manhood. Their moral standards might be different. Holding might be corrupt to the core in his business relations. But if what he thought his honor were menaced *he* would fight! If it were *his* wife— Ward shrank away from his own thought. The other man would not be living, triumphing. Holding would not have forgiven his wife, be *living* with her. Ward's forehead scorched. And then it was cold with drops of sweat. He was sick with disgust for everything. He couldn't bear the man in his sight a minute longer. He wiped his forehead and stammered to Holding:

"You needn't—stay now. I won't need you until the case comes to court. Or—I'll talk to you another time—or get what I want then—"

In his haste to get Holding out of the room his voice was apologetic. He found difficulty in meeting the eye of the wondering boor. When

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he did meet them Holding almost shouted. The lawyer's eyes, as he tried to face the other man, were cowed.

Holding wondered just what piece of brilliancy of his own had done it. He swelled with a sense of his own omnipotence, turned on his heel more than half insolently and went whistling from the room.



## CHAPTER XII

**I**F Mayo, as many asserted, had made the city contributory to him to the extent of several millions, there was little in his house or manner of living to show it. The house was moderate in size, plain and comfortable, in a quarter of the city that had never been more than respectable, and now was left so far behind in the growth of the city that it was dishearteningly shabby.

In comparison with sagging gates, broken shutters, and woodwork gray-brown from chronic lack of paint, the Mayos' wide, square, red-brick house, always freshly painted as to doors and window-sills and shutters, and shining bright as to broad-paned windows, and—wonder to relate—with not one bar of its spiked iron fence broken, represented the one heartening bit of prosperity and self-respect upon the street.

There were a few of Mayo's plain old city friends who knew, or suspected, the bit of tenderly hidden sentiment that kept him loyal to the old house and the old street. It was the first

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home of his young manhood, the one to which he had taken Claire's mother after the baldly simple ceremony by which the world had given its consent that they should be one. But there was another motive as deeply hidden and perhaps quite as potent as this. Where he ruled he preferred to rule, not because his subjects' eyes were dazzled with the show of riches, but because he was the strongest man among them, holding his apparently impregnable position as he had won it—by reason of the dominating force that pushed him always to the front. Therefore he kept his fortune—whatever it might be—carefully stored away, so much ammunition to be used in warfare. But his home was guarded a bit more jealously still.

Few of his business associates knew the inside of it. But it happened that on the eve of the date set for his trial the Big Man slipped on a banana peeling and sprained his ankle. Consequently several of those who were concerned were summoned to the house to confer with him relative to the defense. Brice, Holding's principal, was there, a black-eyed man with a jaw like a steel trap; and Holding and Mayo's attorneys. The Big Man had retained the same lawyers that had conducted the defense in the Garvin case; there were no shrewder criminal

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lawyers in the city, unless one considered those whose assignment to a case would brand it immediately as one that could be won only by crooked legal makeshifts. Brice was evidently nervous. He was a self-sufficient, arbitrary man, but at this moment he was leaning a good deal on Holding with his reports of victory over Ward.

The room in which they held their consultation was the second of the series of three square, old-fashioned apartments that occupied the first floor of Mayo's house. It was furnished comfortably enough, but without one item of superfluous decoration. The big chairs were leather-covered, the pictures on the wall, "Belshazzar's Feast" and other equally solemn art efforts contemporary with it. Claire's tasteful hand, which was beginning to be felt in the rest of the house, had been stayed at the door of her father's study. From the front room came the strains of a piano very softly played and still further softened by the closed folding-door. It happened to be Sunday afternoon, and the music, while it wandered through many ages and chose among many composers, had in it always something that was gently in tune with the simpler and more austere observance of the day.

The Big Man sat at the head of a huge library

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table, his bandaged foot on a chair at the side, so he was slightly turned away from the others. Around the desk were the lawyers, Mayo's chief lieutenant among the ward politicians, and Brice. They had just heard Holding's report of his interview with Ward.

"You think he had his hand on the safe-deposit business?" asked Brice, with his air of having unwillingly let something valuable escape with his words.

"Sure!" Holding had lost something of his awe of his employer with the novel sense of importance. "But I must have put him off the track, for he let it drop."

"That's curious," put in the senior counsel. "From what I know of Ward he's the last man to let go of an idea once he has got it. He hangs onto it like a bulldog."

"Maybe he wasn't really warm," suggested Brice, rather eagerly.

"Repeat just what Mr. Ward said," Mayo directed Holding.

"Holding repeated his account. "And then when I came back into the room he just sort of faded away," he ended. "He looked at me like he was kind of afraid of me."

Every one smiled involuntarily at Holding's swelling chest. But his employer put an end

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to his period of self-satisfaction by saying, dryly: "You'd better wait and see that Mr. Ward doesn't turn you inside out when he gets you in the witness-box. Suppose you go now and absorb all the starch you can into your system."

After his departure the discussion ran for some moments on the character of the new jurymen:

"There's no use expecting anything from them," said Mayo, finally, with decision. "When you've got the whole Civic Club, what can you expect?"

"Maybe when Judge Barnard hears that the Governor has jumped into it that may have some effect," put in one of the others.

Mayo spoke with some impatience:

"No, nothing can be done with Barnard, either. I had him sounded the other day and there's nothing doing. He'll rule for us only if the weight of evidence is for us. Our job is to see to it that the weight of evidence is for us."

"Well, there's not a particularly rosy outlook there, for if Ward has got hold of the idea that money was deposited in the safe-deposit for you by Holding no power on earth will keep him from making out a pretty heavy case against you." Brice's mouth closed over the unpleasant fact with such alacrity that it savored of enjoyment.

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"Exactly so. The thing to do is to prevent Ward from digging out that interesting fact," said Mayo, coolly.

"You'll never do that in the world if he's on the scent," began the senior counsel. But the other lawyer spoke for the first time:

"Say, what's the matter with Ward lately? He's not up to his usual form. Do you suppose there's anything in this story that Holding tells?"

"It's not likely—" began some one else. But Mayo pushed their opinions aside with good-humored indifference.

"Ward's the man to get hold of. He's beginning to go to pieces. I haven't made up my mind yet whether it's some personal enmity to Cowperthwaite—"

"But they have always been great friends—knew each other as boys. I remember Ward's telling me that once. That's been one thing that's made it hard for us."

"I don't care how much they have been friends."

It was characteristic of Mayo that, although he rarely raised his voice above its easy level, it always dominated.

"There is something wrong there now. There was either absolute hatred or a pretty good imi-



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tation of it that I caught in one glance that he launched at Cowperthwaite. I have no means of knowing whether it is anything but some passing disagreement, but I have my theory. And it may be that in that is our best method of getting the verdict. Something has happened to throw Ward off his balance. It may make him miss his opportunity in this Holding matter. Then by holding them down to the lack of direct evidence we may win out. Or it may be that if Ward hates Cowperthwaite hard and permanently we can get at Ward more directly. That's my job; we'll wait and see. In any case, it's my judgment that it's Ward we want to aim at. If we don't do more than make him lose his temper twenty times a day, he's got a good hot one and undignified wrath always tells for the other side. And now I guess that's as far as we can go for to-day. You've got all our witnesses letter-perfect, I suppose?" And the genial nod he gave in response to the assurance that it was so dissolved the meeting.

Left to himself, Mayo threw open the window to let out the cigar smoke, took up the paper, and disposed his injured foot more comfortably. The evening was coming on; the moment was a peaceful, quiet one. The situation he was in troubled him only moderately. He had always

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taken chances and had always counted the cost. Miraculously enough, Claire had seen nothing of the approaching trial. She rarely looked at the papers, and Mayo had taken pains to leave none lying around. He didn't want her troubled before it was necessary for her to be. The few friends who came to the house had received a hint from him.

The picture of his daughter in the crisply, lacy white frock she had worn at her commencement the year before faced him from a silver frame on his desk. Frocks of that nature were rare enough in their joint experience for this one to have been commemorated. Wide as were the Big Man's political and business associations, their social circle was but little more extensive than the one Mayo and his young wife had made together. His social instincts were much the same; he had cared for nothing else. Therefore Claire had few friends; it was surprising how few.

"Too few," he thought, his eyes on the fair sweetness of the face. "I wonder if I have done her an injury keeping her to myself in this way. Perhaps she ought to have more young folks around—more suitors to choose from." He admitted this to himself reluctantly, with a rueful smile at the twinge of fatherly jealousy the

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thought gave him. "If her mother had lived she'd have known how to manage it." His heart stood still a moment, as it always did at that thought.

He struck open a new page of the paper and read the head-lines rather absent-mindedly. "Claire would have her train—she'd hold her own with any one," his thought dropped back. "Lyman really cares for her, I think. Every man I've seen her with has admired her; they couldn't help it. Even Cowperthwaite—and he's a cool one. I saw it in his face as he looked after her."

Involuntarily the picture of his daughter with her beauty and the innocence of her belief in people came to him, surrounded as she would be, were he to crook his finger, with curious or self-interested men drawn to her by the knowledge of her father's power and by the bruit of her money. He frowned in sharp distaste. All of his domestic ideas belonged to a simpler, more autocratic, patriarchal society. The thought of a young girl in the glare of publicity, for sale in the market, was abhorrent to him. With his experience of the callousness of the struggle for existence, he understood only too well how keenly the prize would be sought. He had always hated and feared the thought of it, his

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little girl the quarry for a pack of hunters. And he had many times resolved, in the simplicity of his sense of power, that when the time came that he must think of bestowing her for her own happiness it should be he, not Claire, who should weigh the qualifications of aspirants in the balance of his reason and so give her where he knew it would be for her good. He knew men; there had never been a political combination that he had not been able to arrange; he had no doubt but that he could direct this mere domestic arrangement. No doubt of his power and no question but that his motives were of a saintly unselfishness had ever come to mar his content.

“What if the case should go against me!” The thought flashed on him with a sudden, deadly breath of cold. “And then what if, after taking advantage of all the appeals and delays we can hold them up for, it should still go—wrong. My little girl!”

But the fear only lasted a moment. The next he was laughing at himself. He had never failed in anything when he had really gone in to win.

“I know what juries and judges are made of,” he thought, with reassurance. “What if they have managed to put in this stiff-necked set! They can't last forever. There are other courts

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and other judges. And—why, half the business combinations in the city would go down if they disturbed me. We'd see how long this grandstand play at 'reform' would last with the Northwestern Consolidated and the South Bay and a few other stocks going down!"

He turned again to his paper, but it was with a lingering tinge of solicitude about his daughter. In a minute he threw the paper down.

"By George! but I'd almost like to think it was all settled and there was some one to take care of her if anything happened to me! Even when I've weathered this squall—I'm not as young as I was—you can never tell what is going to turn up to-morrow when a man has passed sixty. If it wasn't for that—I'll be—" Even in his self-communing he checked himself before the word that had almost slipped out got really formulated. In spite of the varied excellence of the vocabularies of profanity among which his activities were spent, Mayo himself, perhaps from some lurking fastidiousness, perhaps because of some religious scruple inherited from the church-attending Scotch-Irish immigrants who were his forebears, was himself absolutely unable to use "swear words." Consequently he often found himself singularly at a loss to express his candid emotions. In this



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case, after deliberation, he selected a word of approximate significance. He substituted, severely, "—inconvenienced—before I'd give her up to any other man!"

A peaceful melody from the piano in the next room slid into his thought. Peaceful it was and to him it seemed very simple. But all the power of a great composer's genius had bent, almost with desperation but with joy in the very pain of effort, to the task he had set himself; to make solitude gold-shot with underlying, subtle threads of melody and thought. And the fingers that brought it all out, melody and subdued accompaniment, unusual modulations that grew into consciousness as the embodiment of feeling long known but never before come to light, were dowered with an instinct for beauty and had been long and severely trained.

After an exquisite final chord of subdued joy and grave triumph there was a pause in the music and the murmur of voices unconsciously and pleasantly attuned to the chords whose vibrations seemed still to linger in the air. Mayo read peacefully, the passing anxiety soothed, a smile on his lips that told that all was well with him again. It was as if gentle fingers had passed over his temples and swept all care away.



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The door opened and Claire came into the room, followed by Lyman. The Big Man's eyes looked upon them both with pleasure, the girl with the direct and yet gentle charm that was peculiarly hers, the young man with his buoyant, upright carriage and the subdued look of pleasure that was about him. He had a charm of manner that could not be denied.

"A fine fellow," thought Mayo, musingly. "With no nonsense about him, efficient, and practical; he doesn't waste time by tilting at windmills; he is ready to deal with conditions as they are. He is loyal, too; he proved that in the way he stood by Garvin. Theories be—" Again he paused at the very threshold of a forbidden word and submitted, politely, "disregarded" before the tribunal that had checked him. "What I want to know about a man is: Can he be loyal to his friends? Lyman is well spoken of everywhere, a fellow of clean habits, too. And that's more important. I brought a clean life to her mother. I'll see to it that no man comes near my little girl that can't do as much."

Lyman was left with the Big Man for an interval, while the girl, with the pleasant homeliness of their customs, had gone to see about the early tea. The Mayos still kept to the old-

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fashioned midday Sunday dinner that should give the servants the afternoon and so make for the whole household some part of a day of rest. And Claire brought to the little task an instinctive delight in cooking: and her pleasure in color and arrangement found outlet in the charming arrangement of the dainty table. Some new dish was always launched on Sunday evening; something that required a lighter hand in tossing it together than the cook possessed and a more subtle sensitiveness to flavors. It was the meal that Mayo liked best of the week, with just himself and his little girl, together with a friend or so, and the table looking as only Claire knew how to make it.

The two men talked, Lyman comfortably smoking, Mayo as comfortable without. The younger man was not unconscious that the conversation was a fairly searching one that turned him and his standards and his business methods inside out. And making no pretense to being a simple youth, he had some notion whither it all tended. His spirits rose still higher as he realized that Mayo was taking the trouble to weigh him in the balance. That meant that he was to be considered seriously. This time there was no difficulty in making Lyman talk.

By the time Claire came back to tell her father,

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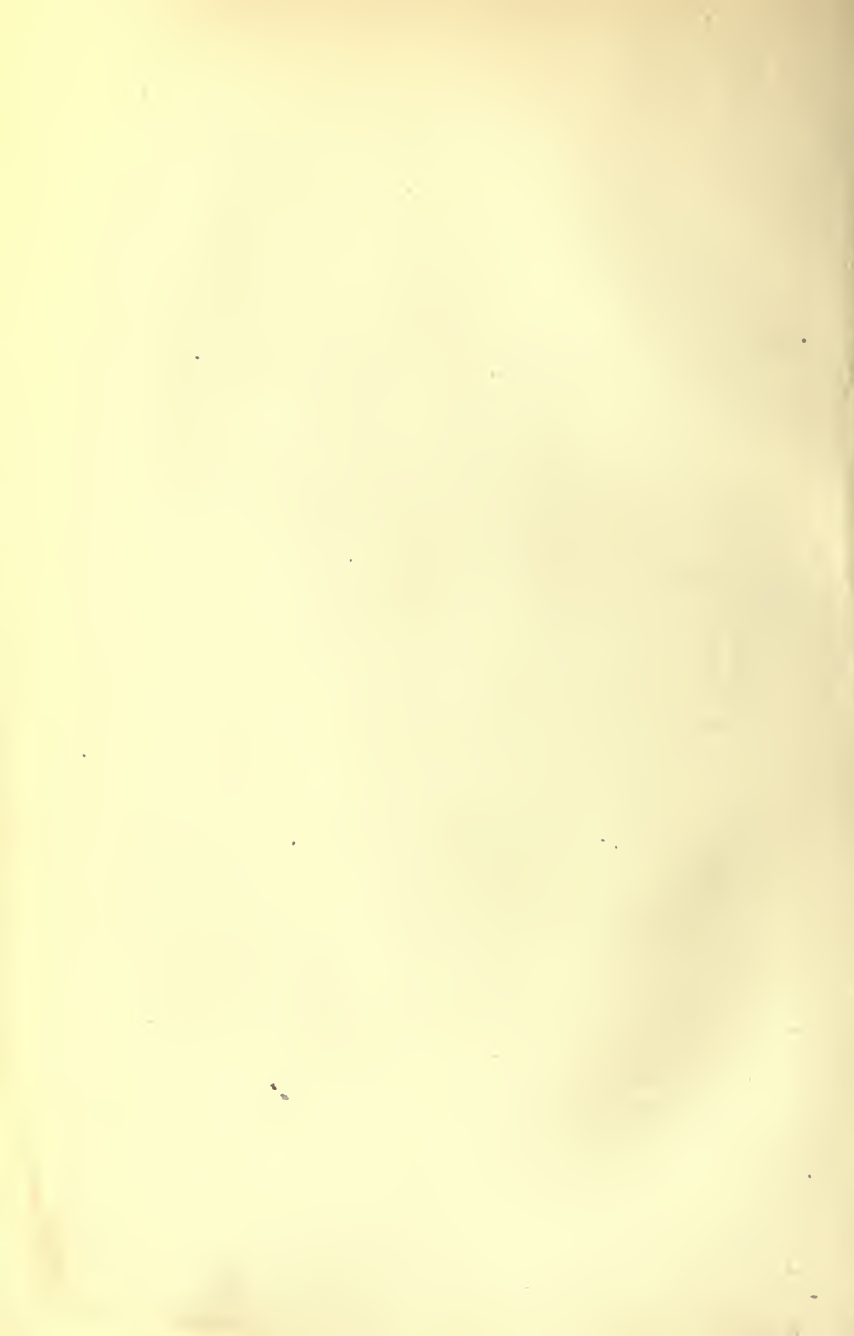
with her caressing hand upon his shoulder, that the meal was ready Mayo had made up his mind. He was used to quick decisions, to picking men in a minute if necessary. As they rose he gave Lyman a friendly clap on the shoulder and leaned on him for support as he hobbled into the next room. From that moment Lyman felt that he had the Big Man back of him, favoring him in his suit.

At Lyman's place Claire had put the chafing-dish, with the chicken and mushrooms, the cream and all the rest. She would have much preferred doing the cooking herself. She hated the untidy way he did things, and then it was much more trouble to get the things together and wait on him and watch him to see he didn't spoil it all at the same time. But she knew he loved to mess around and produce his peculiarly original dish with triumph; his bachelor apartment, with its admirable valet service, she knew in her womanly little heart was a poor excuse for home. So with the simplicity of her type, which is yet as subtly wise as Mother Nature, she let him do the thing he wanted, understanding fully that it was her function to make the men-children happy.

The table was in the soft light of the candles; there was the scent of flowers and the fragrance



LYMAN FELT THAT HE HAD THE BIG MAN BACK OF HIM



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of delicate viands simmering, with the savor of cream and butter and a trace of something pungent. There was peace and enough of pleasant talk. There was a clear-eyed girl whose charming gown fell into graceful lines, a girl deliciously pleased to play at hostess and to radiate her sunny atmosphere of home. So, although she said little that was really clever, both the Big Man, her father, and Lyman, fussily busy with his stirring, sent their talk straight across the shining table to her tranquil eyes. Outside the soft evening shadows were more closely serried; the little group around the lighted table were somehow drawn more closely together. Lyman let even his close-clenched determination to "get on—somehow" relax into peacefulness. And Mayc was able to think with calm of the moment when he must tell Claire what impended.



## CHAPTER XIII

“**I** MUST hurry to the office; it’s going to be a very full day,” Ward muttered.

Ruth had come out into the hall to see the last of her husband before he left for the day. Since his return from Chicago that daily interval of affectionate lingering had been shortened and there was some constraint about what was left of it. Yet it was just the evening before that Ken had hurried home to her from the office, parched for the sight of her tenderness, hungry for her touch. Again and again she had had to assure him that it was really so—that she did love him. At first all the woman in her had exulted in the completeness of his need of her. At last she had been vaguely pained and affronted by the uneasy distrust that was part of the feverish longing in his eyes. She had to fight against the feeling that there was something unmanly in his very fondness. Then she laughed at herself for thinking there could be anything upmanly in Ken. This morning he was restive with suppressed nervousness; he

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wanted to get away; he shunned meeting her eyes. All the sunny peace that had for so long bathed the land they lived in together vanished as she had at last to confess this to herself.

But she clung all the more to the old custom. She was passionately determined not to admit that the unwholesome shadow stood between them. When he turned to pick up the bag with his papers in it and his hat he found she had them.

"Haven't you any work that I can help you with?" She put his hat on for him at a purposely absurd angle; her hands, as they dropped, touched timidly the stubborn lines of his face, lingered over his shoulders. He straightened his hat before he took it off again: the effort to restrain his irritation was evident.

"No, no, nothing that Wilson can't put through," he hurried to answer.

"Is he able to accomplish so much more than he used to do?" Ruth's tone was hurt in spite of her determination not to have it so. It was such a short time since they two had talked together over every step of the way. And now she saw that he preferred to do without her help.

Ward understood how reasonable it was that she should feel hurt. It had been part of his determination that there should be no difference

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in their daily life; otherwise the situation was impossible. He had intended to act wholeheartedly, turning his face away from the spectacle of Ruth's dishonor. It was not in Ward's nature to be small or grudging. But he had not reckoned with the unknown forces in himself, with the uncontrollable gusts of heat and cold that shook him, moments of overwhelming attraction and moments, just as intense, of shuddering recoil. It seemed he could never be in the same mind about his wife two minutes in succession. The result of all the turmoil was that she was fast becoming the center of painful disturbance which he shrank from but which he could not do without. And he hated himself because he could not.

This was one of the times when he had to exert all his will-power not to roughly brush away her hand, hovering again over his shoulder as she found a speck of lint on his coat-collar. The recoil of all his flesh from her was almost agonizing in its intensity. He cautioned himself that he must be all the more careful not to let her see:

"Why—yes, there is something, if it wouldn't be too much trouble. I'd be very glad to have you do some letters for me. It will free Wilson for some other work; the Mayo case is called for

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next Tuesday—" He was taking some papers out of the bag. "Several notes here from people who think they have information in the Garvin matter—we may have to get at Mayo over that, after all, you know, and I can't afford not to follow up every clue there. It would be by far the strongest point of attack if we could get hold of Remsen." Ward was fingering the bundle of correspondence like a hand at bridge as he made this conscientious effort to include Ruth in the work he had at heart. "Of course Remsen would testify if we would make it worth his while."

His tone was almost too careful in its courtesy. It was the punctilious politeness that she had always laughed at when he was consciously trying to be nice to people he didn't like. There was nothing in it akin to the brusqueness of his tone when he loved her most, that roughness that seemed almost to fight against himself for fear—so she had theorized about it in her happy confidence—he should be too fond to be himself. But just because the fear that haunted her was making her physically dazed and sick she clung desperately to the illusion that there was nothing wrong between them. She prolonged the respite before he should leave her to her panic-stricken imaginings by saying:

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"But—how could you make it worth his while?"

"If we were not too scrupulous we might outbid Mayo—"

Her start was so violent that she seemed almost to shrink from him:

"Surely you wouldn't—surely Mr. Cowperthwaite wouldn't agree to that!"

A tide of blood rushed to Ward's face in response to that name. He made some effort to master himself before he spoke:

"What's the necessity of always dragging Cowperthwaite into the conversation?" he demanded, with stiff constraint. "I didn't say anybody was considering it. But you surely must appreciate that in a case like this we are at a great disadvantage when we try to deal with unscrupulous people with overscrupulous means. It is rather a pertinent question whether you are not more effective when you turn the weapons of your adversary against himself. As it is, we stand to lose our case because we are too morally lofty to use the only methods they seem to understand. We have no intention of being anything but our elevated selves. Moreover, we haven't any money to do anything with if we wanted to." He was openly sneering at himself. "I merely noted the fact, in passing, that there is the other side to the question."

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A few weeks ago she would have broken out in heated protest against the callous lightness of his tone. But now—she had grown too wary to risk anything. Yet Ken, those same weeks earlier, would never have taken that half-wearied, half-bitter tone. What *was* the matter with Ken? It couldn't be that he was still angry about Mr. Cowperthwaite; he had seemed to forgive her completely, and it wasn't like Ken to harbor anything. No, it must be that he wasn't well. He was worn out and discouraged; yes, that was it. It had been such a long siege. She explained all this to herself, and then realized that that brought back the specter of some terrible physical collapse coming to her husband that had been stalking her. Still, she clung to his mere presence:

“But about these notes?” she asked, putting out her hand for them.

“Oh, just read them over and tell me what you think about them. You might arrange for interviews with Wilson or me if you think anything sounds promising. I haven't time to go over them thoroughly. This chap, I imagine,” pushing one envelope at her from the packet, “may really have some information that we want.”

“Wouldn't it save time if I had him come



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to the house and questioned him myself? You know you say that I can get information out of a deaf-mute that doesn't know the sign language." She laughed a little mischievously, and her red lips, for the moment, took on their beguiling curve. It was true that, in the past, she had talked with witnesses for her husband when he was pressed for time. And her woman's subtlety in inference had really gained some points that Ken had been glad to follow up even while he teased her about the unwarrantable methods he accused her of using. Now, she had the feeling that if Ken and she could only get back into the interrupted, companionable habit of working side by side this something that stood between them, more impossible to oppose because it was nothing that, to her, seemed tangible, might be dissipated.

Her husband's angry start brought her out of her dream. His black brows were drawn together; the white lock fell threateningly over them; every line in his face told of unrestrained rage:

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" Little of the sound of his voice could get from between his clenched teeth, but all of his fury did. "Won't Cowperthwaite do? One would think you'd had enough! You'll let that man, and every other man, alone! Or—"

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“*Ken!*” Ruth called out sharply. “How dare you! Are you insane? I won’t have you speak to me so!”

The fiery indignation in her changed, in the space of a heart-beat, all of the splendid warm whiteness of her face into gray; her eyes were menacing in their hard brightness. Even her husband, in his jealous madness, could see, now that her face was strained out of the soft curves of the perfect flesh, how rigid and austere were the lines that the mere flesh hid. She held his eyes indomitably, until she forced back into the man’s mind some reason and a little shame. Not so much but that, with a final flaring up of his sullen anger, he took the papers from her roughly, and threw them back into the bag again:

“After all, it’s better that you shouldn’t—bother with it,” he said, curtly. Then he turned on his heel and went to the door. But before he got there, a more civilized instinct had asserted itself. He paused on the threshold to say, in a half-smothered voice: “I suppose—I ought to—beg your pardon.” In his haste to get away before she could have time to answer he left the door standing wide open.

Ruth stood for some moments, helplessly looking at the door through which he had gone.

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Then she went to the door and closed it with a careful quietness. She felt that she must shelter herself from the glance of any chance passer-by. She had an unreasoning conviction that there must be some sign of her shame upon her face.

With the sound of its closing, that dull thing of wood and metal that yet seemed like a part of her life, so often had it shut the careless world out with Ken and herself inside, the burning blood poured back into her face; the torrent was so fiery that it brought the painful tears with it. But her pride was so rebellious that she fought with her tears—it was such a mere soft, womanish thing to cry when her outraged honor cried out, like a man's, for some adequate revenge:

“*Ken was afraid to trust me!* He is still angry about Will Cowperthwaite! How could a thing like that change Ken so?” She whispered it out loud, still more than half unbelieving. “He didn't want me to speak to—any man—alone!”

She was not the woman who could find love in that mad flaming up of jealousy. To her it was sheer insult. All that she recognized in it was the ugly sense of possession and uglier lack of faith.

“What *right* has he to think of me that way!” She clenched her hands. At first she did not recognize that she had bruised them. It was a

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long time before her inexorable sense of justice stirred feebly and whispered to her: "He was never this way before. It is because of what you did—that night." And, after a time, that thought brought softening. It was only then that she let the tears come.

## CHAPTER XIV

WARD found it impossible to face fellow-passengers in the street-car. Hot as the morning was growing to be he walked to his office. He had not gone ten paces before his anger had fallen into a sort of sick hopelessness. He was ashamed and sore and aghast at what the future seemed to threaten.

His very desolation forced him to take stock of himself, of Ruth, of what their life together was becoming. That he could have assailed Ruth, his *wife*, with such vile insults! Why, if his mind could conceive them true for an instant, it was infamy worse than any he had ever conceived to even accept her presence. Of course his reason had never had part with his blind fury—and yet—and yet—if he went at it that way, then, from the standpoint of pure thinking—she whom he had believed the very touchstone of all purity had once fallen. Even cold science stood father to the assertion that a woman once fallen is indelibly, inevitably, branded for corruption, her very fiber tainted,

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impregnated with the sin even though for years foresworn. Oh, upright judge, this science, to make of itself an ally for jealous husbands! Ward laughed with wild bitterness at his rasping thinking. He came to himself, to find that he had been walking at a furious rate. His face was burning; the blood was pounding in his temples:

"It's too hot for emotion," he thought, cynically, and walked more slowly. Then, with a change of mood, he went to work to analyze the situation coolly. He soon commented to himself, almost with amusement, on the fact that his "analysis of the situation" seemed to resolve itself into weighing the pros and cons of Ruth's future loyalty! Then he rebuked himself with a sharp sense of desecration; but the next moment he was back in the same train of thought. "No"—this was his final verdict—"the *probability* is against any further lapse. My suspicion of this morning was entirely unwarrantable." He was inclined to congratulate himself on the calmness with which his mind registered its judicial conclusion. "There was a great deal to explain (and perhaps justify to some extent) that affair with Cowperthwaite. There was that old fondness between them. And then—the circumstances—a sudden flaming up of the old



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attraction. It's all nonsense to say that a normal woman's any more immune to temptation than a man; that's one thing that the most truthful woman's never frank about; it's one of the popular poses. There is one point at which we are all vulnerable!" Ward's forehead burned, and he roused himself confusedly from his attempt to weigh his wife's case dispassionately. He realized that his emotions were those of an assassin.

With an effort he got back into some calmness:

"—Of course, I shall have to be careful of her; that's only common sense. It isn't fair to place before any one a temptation that may possibly prove too strong to be resisted. One doesn't leave a large amount of money around where it might corrupt even the most honest servant. Yes, I must guard her in the future. Ruth is almost wholly good; there's only this slight taint. I have been to blame for trusting her too absolutely. I must see that she doesn't meet Cowperthwaite. The worst of it is, it will be almost impossible, from the conditions we live in, to avoid their meeting sometimes. And every meeting may be a danger. I wish we could get away from here. If I were not tied up here with these prosecutions I could. Why can't Cowperthwaite have the decency to go away?"

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He's not accomplishing anything here—none of us are, in fact. Oh, it's inconceivable that it's *Ruth* I'm thinking about this way! No, I'm sure the probabilities are against any further trouble."

By the time Ward got to his office the heat, his fatigue, the numbing effect of going over and over again the same round of thought, had reduced him to an apparent quiet. He greeted Wilson pleasantly, began on his mail, started the office on its daily routine. Among the letters that Wilson pointed out was one from some man who claimed he spoke for Remsen. It was a reiteration of Remsen's offer to testify for them if it was worth his while. The sum he mentioned was less than the one at first demanded. Wilson watched his principal with a confident smile on his face while the lawyer read it. At last Ward looked up:

"It might be rather convenient if we had the money; we could get our results quicker," he said, adding, under his breath, "and get rid of these damned cases!"

"But, of course, *you* wouldn't—" the boy burst out.

Ward gave a quick glance at him before he wrote his "No," and flipped the letter into the wire basket. A saddened pity for the boy's

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still un mutilated idealism made his manner rather gentle:

"That's the answer," he said, lightly. "But don't you flatter yourself for a moment that our honesty's anything more than relative! It's either that the price isn't big enough or that we haven't the money that makes the answer 'No' instead of 'Yes.'" He laughed with some heartiness, and Wilson, reassured after his momentary qualm, laughed too with more emphasis than Ward's joke seemed to merit.

When he had gone Ward tipped his chair back and looked out of the big, unshaded window into the commonplace business street. A memory of himself when he could have spoken with Wilson's unquestioning belief came to him; its date was not so far back. He felt a sort of wonder at himself for having spoken—and felt—so callously. He caught a passing glimpse of the man he had become, realized the distance he had traveled since the night he had lost faith in Ruth.

"But after all it's the same world," he thought in some bewilderment. "Was I fooled then—or now?"

There was no air stirring at that moment, the light was glaring, the horses' hoofs made deep prints in the asphalt, people moved past list-

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lessly, faces mean or anxious or merely vacant—there seemed to be not one strong, buoyant, believing thing in the world that lay under his eyes. And in his heart, whenever he turned his gaze inward, underneath that film of control in which his mind registered its cooler judgments, he knew that the two Titans that in every crisis ruled him were at their never-ending, devastating struggle. So it would be always—always the fierce leaping up of primal impulse—that one giant that was his outraged manhood in death-grapple with the unconquerable, lusty Titan that craved the woman.

“Why is it?” Ward asked, in dull bewilderment. “Why is it, when the religious people teach us that forgiveness is a holy thing, that when I have tried to forgive her I have let hell loose around us both?” The next instant he said grimly, in response to that importunate voice that was never quite throttled within him: “I won’t give her up! I won’t!”

## CHAPTER XV

HALF an hour after Ken had gone the normal, cheerful things had resumed their sway with Ruth. She had had her cry out. Ruth was too wholesome, life had treated her too gently for her to take kindly to tragedy. With the sane instinct to get over a grief—taking now its place in her imagination as a small grief—she felt around in thought for the most cheering thing she could do. It was getting too hot to make going down-town pleasant; if that hadn't been so there was the unfailing resource of a true woman, the pretty things in the shops—and she hadn't spent all of her allowance yet. She might telephone to some one of the women she liked best to meet her down-town for lunch—since it couldn't be Ken. But all that required too much effort, people were leaving town, and then, she couldn't get her eyes right by that time; they would see she had been crying, and people might think it was Ken's fault. No, she didn't really want to go down-town.

So she pattered over her round of morning

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activities, finding them uninteresting enough, but dully soothing. In due time she remembered the vases that she had to fill with fresh flowers, and she went up-stairs to get her garden-shears. There was that one door that it always hurt her to pass. It was open, she could see the screen in the far corner. She shut it gently and went on her way. She paused in the kitchen to give directions about the day's cleaning, and so went through and out among the flowers.

It was just a narrow city back yard. But Ruth had carried her village habits into city life; she had always been able to make things grow. The high fence kept off most of the early morning sun; it was sweet and cool and shady.

"Not much but nasturtiums this morning," she thought, absently, as she cut, one after one, the vigorous, brilliant, pungent blooms. "The sweet-peas are drying up; and I did think I had had the trench dug deep enough this time. I'll give it up now. You cannot make sweet-peas grow in this climate. But the nasturtiums, you can't keep them from growing. They're almost as energetic as the weeds; they choke up everything else the minute they get in—how could Ken have let such a hideous feeling about me grow in his heart! Oh, it's more than I deserve!"

She cut a rose off too close to its calyx with the



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sudden passionate rebellion of the thought. And there were so few roses blooming that morning, too. "Why didn't he come to me instead of brooding? It isn't like Ken not to say things out. But I told him I couldn't bear to talk about it," she remembered. "Well, how can one talk about it? But he is punishing me more than I deserve. After all, it was a little thing to have changed him so."

She spent a good part of the morning in the garden. She had neglected it, and there was weeding to do. The ground was caked hard around the roots of the roses with the dry heat that had marked the early summer days. The flowers she had cut placed comfortably in water and arranged to her taste in the many quaint and simple vases scattered through the rooms; she went back to minister to the needy plants, and dug and weeded, pulled off dead leaves and killed the slugs that had begun to infest her rose-bushes, and watered where the plants were still in shadow. To reward her, flower-beds stretched in orderly brownness and sent out their good damp, earthy smell; the flowers raised their bright heads, unchoked by weeds; a breeze rose and shook the fragrance from her garden; the air was full of the cheerful drowse of some vagrant bees; there were even a few jewel-bright butter-

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flies that, receiving invitations by their wireless, found her flowers out.

So it seemed but a little space before her trouble, that had seemed so heavy, dropped off and was buried in the brown earth by her busy trowel. The bright flowers nodded at her, shaming her lack of faith with their smiling faces; the steadfast droning of the bees rebuked her, crooning that all storms rise out of, and sink into, peace.

"Things always adjust themselves," she thought at length. "The best way is to let it go. What queer beings men are, anyway! You think you know your husband in every cranny of his dear, unreasonable man-nature. And then, all at once, it's a dreadful stranger that's facing you. But it won't take long; we'll get back again. After all, I couldn't help it if Will Cowperthwaite was a little silly." She blushed and laughed a little; the whole thing was fading from her mind; it seemed light in the broad daylight and with the man lapsed into the casual place he had occupied for so long. And it seemed all the more foolish that Ken could be making so much of it. "If it wasn't Ken," she thought with a little laugh of affectionate exasperation. "And if I could ever stay angry with him for five minutes, I'd be really—"

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But she was so tired by this time that she didn't have energy enough left to finish the threat against Ken's peace. Instead she straightened her tired back, brushed some of the earth from her hands, looked at her finger-nails ruefully, and prepared to go back into the house. The sun was almost at its height; the heat was growing more oppressive. Still, as she turned to go in, when a small bank of clouds hid the sun for a moment, and a wind rose suddenly from nowhere and set the garden sighing, Ruth shivered with a sudden sense of chill.

"If Ken should ever," Ruth whispered to the specter that had risen in her heart, "if he should ever really doubt me—if, for an instant, he could dare to think me capable of real evil—"

At the thought a fire rose in her so furious that the red of her smiling lips was scorched into white ashes, her white face implacable. It was the first time the thought had come to her—nothing harder than to convince a proud, clean woman who has never been doubted that a doubt is possible. So the fire rose slowly. "If he should ever shame me so insufferably, doubt my being merely decent! I wonder if anything could make me willing to forgive him!" . . .

## CHAPTER XVI

COWPERTHWAITTE was hurrying to Ward's office one morning in the second week of the Mayo trial. In the long, bleak corridor on which the office rooms opened a young woman was lingering, apparently undecided.

She was looking up at the name on the door opposite which she stood with puzzled indecision. He halted in case she wished to question him.

"Pardon me—can you tell me where Mr. Waller's office is?" She had raised her eyes to his before he realized that it was Miss Mayo. As their eyes met he saw a puzzled light of recognition come into her face.

She had clung to his memory as inevitably as does the impression of a rare and fresh perfume. It came to him now with a shock of surprise that she was very beautiful. At their first meeting he had seen nothing but the marvelous clearness of her eyes. But following hard upon the involuntary shock of pleasure came his realization of the errand upon which she must be there.

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"Mr. Waller's office is on the next floor, Miss Mayo." To himself he was thinking: "I wonder what words Mayo found to tell her in." Somehow the thought was so painful to Cowperthwaite that he hurried from it. "Let me take you to the elevator."

She put out her hand with sweet cordiality. "Oh, thank you—I *thought* that I had met you somewhere. This is all very confusing to me. I was to meet my father in Mr. Waller's office."

Had he imagined it, or had her voice halted before the "father"? Certainly when she spoke the word it was with proud emphasis. Cowperthwaite saw that she was struggling to remember him.

The realization of what her father's indictment must mean to her came to him, that indictment that the prosecution had felt such exultation in securing. He walked by her side in stricken silence.

As an open door gave them a glimpse into one of the solid, handsome, municipal office rooms, "Don't you like the City Hall?" she asked of Cowperthwaite eagerly. "My father is very proud of it; he had a good deal to do, you know, with the building." She paused a moment, and her face was drenched with color. But she recovered herself and raised her head proudly.



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“My father, you know, is John Crayke Mayo. I am Claire Mayo. I am to meet him to be with him at the—the trial. He didn't want me to come. But, of course, you know, I would.”

Her eyes sought his with a grave question in them. Cowperthwaite thrilled in some boyish, idealistic corner of him which he had forgotten, at the loyal quiver in her voice.

“He'll be vindicated, of course. Every one who thinks about it must know that, certainly any one who has ever known him. Why, my father! I have never known him to say a thing that was even half-way untrue. He began when I was a very little girl, and we were left alone together, to teach me never to swerve, by a hair's-breadth even. He has always weighed every word in dealing with me; he wouldn't let even an evasion go. And so, when he told me, when he had to, about the trial, it seemed a long time before I could believe it. It seemed so monstrous. My father—of all the world!”

Cowperthwaite turned burning red as if he were the guilty one. With a constriction of his throat he watched her, as she turned from him to recover herself after the emotion that had welled up with her words. He muttered something perfunctory about the situation being “trying for her.”



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“You don't think there's any doubt of the verdict, do you?” She turned to him with an endearing confidence.

Cowperthwaite was almost stunned by the question. Fortunately she must have taken his blank expression for the answer she hoped for. For she went on, with a hurried rush of words that made the man who heard her realize that she had been pent up, choked for want of some one to talk to, some one to steady her fear.

“You see, I can't say anything to father, except how absurd, how impossible, it all is. I haven't felt like seeing any one since he told me. I don't know why I am talking to you. Only, you know, if one is a woman, there are times when one has to talk. I suppose one ought to be strong enough not to talk at all. But if you're not, and if you know you have got to be strong in the end, and it's something that is going to last a long time, then you have to be weak at the moments that don't count so much. That is, if it *is* being weak to expect sympathy from people. Of course, I knew as soon as I saw you that I knew you—only I can't just remember where it was we met.”

Cowperthwaite started as the moment came at last that he had known would come, sooner or



"I AM ASSOCIATE COUNSEL FOR THE PROSECUTION"



## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

later. He was hoping it would have held off a moment more.

"It was last month," he began, his eyes still on her, dreamily resolved to lose no instant of the beauty of her face while it still smiled at him her surprising, friendly confidence. "I was talking with your father when you came up in your car to get him." He evaded her question while he could, feeling that each minute had value.

"Last month! Where? I don't remember." She was searching in her memory.

Suddenly he knew that he couldn't wait to have her find it out herself.

They had reached the door of Waller's office, and he had to bend past her to open it.

"My name is Cowperthwaite," he said, turning the knob. "I was talking with your father about some points connected with his case before it came to court. I am associate counsel for the prosecution."

Then he straightened himself and stood erect.

He saw the knowledge creep into her eyes. He expected the involuntary recoil before it came. He had time to notice a flash of something that was like the sense of personal loss before the veil fell over her eyes.

"Thank you so much," she said, with an inclination of her head that had an appealing, child-

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like dignity in it. "I will tell my father that I met you. Good morning."

She had to pass him to enter the room. But as he turned back down the corridor, he caught a quick glance that followed after him. And hope leaped up to see that, in spite of the pain in it, there was also an involuntary impulse toward him of a wistful trust.

## CHAPTER XVII

RUTH WARD started as she saw Cowperthwaite across the crowded room. That would be a good opportunity to speak to him. She gave a hurried glance around to see whether Ken had come yet; as she had made him promise he would. Then she hated herself for the instinct of precaution. She wasn't accustomed to taking precautions.

"It is humiliating to both of us to make concessions to this absurd jealousy that has grown on Ken lately," she thought; angrily. And yet, in the same moment, she knew she could not endure to see the thunder-cloud that would come into his face if he should see her talking to Cowperthwaite. "I'll be so happy when he is himself again," she sighed.

A good many people turned to look at her as she made her way from one room to the farther side of the next one. Ruth was never more charming than that afternoon, with the blue of her eyes like the strong tone of the Northern



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pine-rimmed seas, and the paler blue of her frock with its tracery of delicate embroidery.

"Dresses up to her hair," said one woman, with a nod to her neighbor.

"No, I think it's her eyes," said her friend. "But, somehow, although I've really got sense enough to know that no woman could ever get just the effect she does without lying awake nights to think it up, she always gives you the effect of its being unconscious. Just a sort of natural endowment."

"Inspired clothes like that don't happen," the first woman said, with an envious and yet friendly shake of the head. "And just look at that splendid red head of hers, with the big black hat flaring back everywhere it can flare and still hold on, to let us see all there is of it to be seen. And every other woman here with her hat down over her shoulders!"

Both women laughed, but it was with a sort of admiring indulgence. The next moment Ruth had stopped to speak to them. Her smile was as warm as her hair and as true as her eyes. Nobody ever managed to send more sunny magnetism through a smile than Ruth did. It was a living thing, and it made a little center of bubbling human friendliness wherever it flashed.

After a few words Ruth passed on. It was

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unfortunate that while she was still within ear-shot she caught a phrase or so of their lower-toned colloquy that quenched her smile: "She's the cleverer of the two. My husband says Ward must be losing his nerve." "It's a pity; he began so well. I wonder what—"

Ruth winced, and then frowned. But in spite of her painful preoccupation she caught the eye of the little bride. For it was the necessity of wishing well to that tired and nervous and flushed little girl that had brought the whole struggling and uncomfortable crowd together. Nothing short of a wedding that insisted on getting itself performed in summer would have summoned forth all the stay-at-homes and as many of the various summer colonies as were near enough to the city to attend. Ruth smiled at her, managing kind-heartedly to convey the impression of such enthusiastic admiration that the girl thought to herself that, after all, her veil must hang well. At her smile Ruth caught her breath, almost with a sob. One needs to be blessedly sure of one's unaltering felicity, present or to come, not to find in another wedding more of a strain on one's emotion than it is pleasant to undergo.

At that moment Ruth did not have quite that blessed assurance. She had dreaded to come. But this was one of the solid old city families

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with connections so ramified that scarcely a bank or big corporation in the city was without a representative. And the bride's father was one of the leading influences in the Civic Club. The murmur that had just reached Ruth's ears was not the first that had come to her. She had begun to fear that her husband's loss of prestige was something more than a temporary wave of criticism. Ken himself, in his strangely sullen mood, would do nothing to conciliate. If her husband's supporters were to be kept together, Ruth realized that she must do her share and his too.

It wasn't a difficult task for her, or even a particularly unpleasant one. Ruth was a good soldier, and could have held together a forlorn hope as bravely as any old campaigner. It seemed almost unfortunate that she had been born to such a narrow field. She was full of friendliness, so that what might have been conceived as policy ended as spontaneous liking. The wine of good comradeship always went to her head and made her a little tipsy, as she had often told Ken after some evening when everything had seemed to gravitate miraculously toward her. And Ken had always been so sympathetic, so loyally admiring, until now. Well, the small distraction of flying around all she could, anywhere in the city where people remained who should be kept

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friendly to Ken, or for week-ends at one of the lakes, helped to dull the voice of dismayed mis-giving that was refusing to be hushed in her heart.

So the little stir of friendliness that even the stifling atmosphere of a summer-time reception did not prevent followed in her wake until she met Cowperthwaite. But then, in response to his eminently impersonal greeting, she felt her face grow red. It was the first time she had seen him since that morning. Ruth told herself that it wasn't wonderful that she felt embarrassed at having to remember such a scene as that.

The next moment she had forgotten her momentary discomfiture because she chose to forget it.

"Will," she said, abruptly, the old name coming unconsciously to her lips, "I want to ask you something."

"I can hardly believe there is any wisdom existent that you don't already possess."

It was Will Cowperthwaite's old cleverly inviting smile, and she felt suddenly at home and comfortable. Still, she chose to treat the subject with seriousness:

"It's about Ken," she said.

There was the slightest tension of expression on the man's face.

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"Is Ken coming here to-day?" he asked.

She nodded eagerly.

"Yes, I told him he must. Of course he rebelled flatly, though I told him how necessary it was to keep in touch with people."

"As you may infer, I had some sense of obligation myself." Cowperthwaite smiled ruefully as he looked at the uncomfortable crowd.

"I thought maybe you might come from court together. I told Ken they would forgive him; one of his excuses was that he hadn't time to go home to dress."

"I haven't seen very much of Ken lately outside of court." Cowperthwaite's eyes were very steadily on her as he spoke. There could have been nothing more natural than the casualness of his tone. Yet, although she was longing to ask: "What's the matter? Surely you're friends again?" she could not have approached the subject even to satisfy a stronger craving than she felt. But that other matter she must speak about:

"Something came up the other day that alarmed me a little."

Nothing could have been more encouraging than the silence that awaited what she had to say.

"Do you think Ken is in any danger?" she asked, abruptly.

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"Danger! Of what? Losing his case?"

"No, no; I mean of personal violence. From any of Mayo's faction."

He laughed at her fears.

"Oh no, you exaggerate the conditions. We think, it is true, that Mayo has been as lawless as any old freebooter. But that is rather because he has owned the law; he didn't have to break it. That's all in a public capacity. In other respects, I assure you, Mayo is a mighty pleasant person. I more than half like him. It isn't the man we're fighting. It's the system that made him. I believe that half the men in our civic life don't know right from wrong."

"I didn't mean that. Of course I knew Mr. Mayo was above any personal violence. But—you don't know what awful letters Ken has been getting!" Her lips were white at the thought. "Just yesterday he received one—"

"Anonymous, of course." Cowperthwaite's smile was reassuring.

"Signed 'Honest Citizen,' or something like that. But this one is the fourth he has received in the same handwriting. And it seems to me that they are beginning to make some impression on Ken. He always used to laugh at them. But now—"

"You thought he was losing his nerve a little?"



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asked Cowperthwaite. While his tone was light, the reiteration of the phrase she had heard from other lips a few moments before, and something in the very absence of expression in his face, impressed her painfully.

“Of course he isn't ‘losing his nerve,’” she replied, with spirit, her own head high. “Although I have been trying, ever since the letters began to come, to make him take some precautions, he has always refused. But—I suppose it must be just because I have kept at him so long—he— This morning I saw him load a pistol and put it in his pocket. Of course that made me anxious; I wondered if you had heard anything. Do you feel there is any danger?”

Cowperthwaite hastened to calm her:

“Not the slightest, I assure you. Any prosecution like this, that stirs up the vicious sediment in a city, offends a good many gentlemen who have found a fat living in ignoring the laws. They naturally don't look with favor on anything that threatens to disturb them. Letter-writing is invariably an accomplishment of gentlemen of their sort. They have a notion that people are to be bullied into the course of action they themselves find more convenient. Every one engaged in any reform movement gets quantities of mail of that nature.”

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"Do you?" she asked, quickly.

"Hardly miss a mail," he assured her, cheerfully. "Got a beauty this morning. It artistically suggested dynamite for the whole courtroom. I suppose they would choose a time when their champions were not present. So, you see, there isn't any reason to worry."

But the means he had taken to reassure her only seemed to trouble her more.

"You think, then, there is nothing to be nervous about?" she asked, slowly, something reluctant in her voice. "But it isn't like Ken—" She did not finish her sentence, so he answered the direct question before it.

"Not a thing. I am sure he needn't be nervous—" Her face changed so quickly he knew he had said the wrong thing.

"Oh, it wasn't because of Ken," she said. "I have never been able to make him ordinarily cautious. Ken is absolutely fearless, reckless even; you must know that. I was just panicky myself."

"Oh, certainly; I understand," he hurried to say. But to himself he commented:

"Still, he thought enough of that silly business to take arms with him. What's the matter with Ward? I wonder if Ken is losing his grip. She's afraid of it. That's what this means.

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She doesn't know anything about fear for herself. I haven't been sailing and swimming and riding our mountain trails with her without finding that out. Whew!—but she'd hate a coward!"

At this stage in his thought he realized that Mrs. Ward was speaking hurriedly.

"Good-by," she said, her breath fluttering. "I see Ken. I must meet him. He'll never know how to get around without me. Did you ever see anything more helpless?" She tried to laugh, but the laugh had an uncertain sound. And she was edging away.

Cowperthwaite followed her eyes. Ward had seen them. His face, as he tried to smile in passing an acquaintance, was twisted torture; the white lock, for all of his evident effort to bring smoothness into his rough hair, was threateningly alert. He was summoning his wife with the desperate command of jealous possession.

Then his eyes met Cowperthwaite's. Ward glanced from the man to his wife. His face flushed a furious red, and he made, involuntarily, a threatening lunge toward Cowperthwaite. Ruth did not see it; some one had stopped to speak to her. But several of the bystanders did, and looked at the two men curiously.

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Cowperthwaite, too, flushed, but slightly. He made no effort to advance toward Ward or to greet him conventionally. Ward's manner was unmistakable. At last Cowperthwaite knew that Ken had not believed his account of the all-night motor-trip. He believed that his friend had stolen his wife. And, for the moment, Cowperthwaite hated Ward with his whole heart.

The hatred was too great for him to hide it. He stood still, his head very high, his eyes on the other man with the inevitable challenge in them. Under cover of conversation with this person or with that, the widening circle of those who had observed the incident took more or less covert note. Ruth's attention was attracted by some tension in the atmosphere, and she looked fearfully up into Ken's face.

But it was Cowperthwaite now who was defying Ken's eyes. In that moment of suspense Ward's threat had become impotent, sullen, hopeless. With a gesture of helpless anger, he lowered his eyes and turned away. He seemed to have shrunk in stature. There was a suggestion of disintegrating fiber in the slouch of his heavy shoulders.

Ruth turned very white. Ignorant as she was of the full meaning of the encounter, she felt the full force of more than personal shame for

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Ken. It was the first time she had ever seen Ken's eyes quail before those of another man. There was nothing with her of what might have arisen in another woman, the protecting mother-sense that would have flowed forth to cover and comfort the man's defeat. The sense of dishonor was too sharp a wound to allow of any other sensation.

But her pride arose to take the place of tenderness. She forced a smile that was only a little more brilliant than it would have been had it been natural. With an arrogant assumption that all was well, she threw a last jesting remark to Cowperthwaite over her shoulder, shook her husband's arm playfully, threw out, at a venture, "Oh, you needn't glare at Mr. Cowperthwaite; he said he did the best he could with the data you gave him!"—saw, without looking, that her shot had told and that people were wondering what she alluded to; and so, stopping to throw the glow of her personality over every person in the crowd whom it would be prudent to impress favorably, made an exit for them both.

Her husband was absolutely unobservant of her generalship. He had not seen the necessity for it. Under cover of the heavy inexpressiveness that now masked his face, he was thinking, doggedly, fiercely:



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“I must get her away, away from this place, away from Cowperthwaite! Somehow, as soon as I can manage it, I must get her away!”

Cowperthwaite was left, still tingling with anger over the affront of Ward's suspicion. Finally he got back some of his cool control and made his way into the next room, got an ice—anything to move around.

After a time, his temperate philosophy began to assert itself:

“Queer thing,” he thought, “how hatred flares up, when you had got over expecting that thing of yourself by some years, especially when you've outlived the craze for the particular woman by as many. And, now that I think of it, I suppose it isn't extraordinary that Ken should have suspected me—I realized that it didn't look very pleasant at the time, although Ruth evidently had no comprehension—but, I swear, Ken ought to have *known* me better. Oh, well, instinct's strong—two stags fighting over a doe—there's not much to choose between us, man or 'lower' animal. Only, I suppose when you have taken pains to lead a fairly decent life, with a principle or so among your outfit that you haven't broken, you may have some right to feel irritated to find your best friend thinks you capable of a particularly—we'll put



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it—unethical act. But if he thought that of me, why did he let me go, why didn't he try to kill me on the spot? And why did he let me face him down just now? Hanged if I understand Ken. He used to have sand enough. Queer, that scare of his that Ruth told me about—I wonder if he really is weakening. By Jove, this explains lots of things, the way Ken has tried to shove me out of this prosecution—it couldn't have been very pleasant for him to have a man at his side every day that he thought the worst kind of a cad. But what did he mean by saying his 'hands were tied'?"

The contempt that had come into Cowperthwaite's attitude toward his friend made him more uncomfortable than anything else had done. One can fight a man with a certain amount of grim joy. But to have to look aside from the idea of a friend you had given your whole trust to! Cowperthwaite tried to forget it all, put it away from him. He went about the breathless, crowded rooms a little, spoke to an acquaintance here and there. In the midst of his belated social activity a sudden misgiving came to him.

"I wonder," he thought, stopping short, "how much Ward is making his wife pay for this confounded mess. Here I've been supposing

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all this time that, after a proper husbandly outbreak over that shocking bad kiss of mine, everything was all right between them. And here, Heaven knows what he's been making her suffer. Oh—this will never do. There was a look in her eyes just now that was a little like Miss Mayo's. I'll have to make Ward understand, somehow, without losing any more time. For her sake, not for his, I swear. Though just how I'm going to *say it* I'm sure I can't imagine. A nice, pleasant subject of conversation it will be to open with Ward. He'll probably throw me out of the door before I get two words out—pretty hard on the poor little woman, too, to have to take her name in vain that way. Well, I'll have to write it. I can see the letter! —'Dear Ward: You are entirely wrong. I can vouch for it that your wife is a pure woman!'—Good Lord, but I *have* got myself into a joyous situation, and all for a moment's dubious distraction—chilly, too. And the worst of it is, I may be dead wrong about the whole thing; it may be something else that's making Ward rage this way. Then I *would* be in a nice position if I opened the subject. The worst of it is, all this is going to affect the cases; it *has* affected them. We're not doing teamwork at all. And Mayo's so clever you can't afford to neglect a point."

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The name was enough; his thoughts left Ward and his wife and slid down a path they had often taken of late.

“That poor little girl of Mayo’s! How she did hold her head up when she said—” In the midst of the glow that the recollection brought him Cowperthwaite walked dazedly out of the house and down the steps, having forgotten, after all, to do his social duty and congratulate the married pair. He woke from his dream when he was half-way down the block, but he decided then that he would not go back. He found that he had a sort of resentment toward the two harmless young people.

## CHAPTER XVIII

THE Mayo trial had dragged along two weeks. Holding had not yet been called to the stand. But Ward had succeeded in making very little of the other witnesses. Even the casual spectator, who had come with the preconceived notion that in Kenneth Ward's handling of the case he was to see something masterly, had begun to exchange with others occasional glances of disappointment and wonder. It was evident that the attorney often missed a point that might have scored for the prosecution. Just why that was the onlooker would have found it hard to state. But more than one of the defense's witnesses had perceived that if he adopted a certain attitude of belligerency, and confronted the prosecuting attorney with a brave show of defiance, a queer wavering would come into Ward's eyes. As for Ward, bolster up his self-esteem as he might, he could never overcome the misgiving that he had shown the white feather toward some shallow bully on the stand. The knowledge that he had violated the elemental law of his man-

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hood rose up before him and made a craven of him.

Mayo, of course, was out on bail. He could have had the large amount demanded furnished him by friends ten times over. But he chose a bonding company instead. Each day when he appeared his "little girl" was at his side. In spite of the fact that the court-room had ceased to be the chamber of horrors it had been on the day when Cowperthwaite had guided her to the meeting with her father, Claire had never quite lost her shrinking from it. Yet she never thought of staying away.

It was strange how Cowperthwaite's knowledge of the girl grew, by leaps and bounds, during those days when he never exchanged one word of audible speech with her. He learned much from her mere calm, that quietude that was neither tense nor empty of emotion, but was rather the perfect equipoise that was the expression of some hidden harmony. He learned much from her eyes, whose perfect clearness was never shallow. Often when Cowperthwaite, after some bit of legal sparring, rose to speak, he met her eyes, grave, flinching somewhat as his glance joined hers, but finally steadfast. He learned more from the involuntary gesture, like the hovering of warm, outstretched wings,

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with which her arm lingered a moment over her father when some bit of evidence seemed to press him hard, or by her flush of sympathy at the confusion of some harried witness, a flush so deep that it almost forced the tears.

Her presence was an unrecognized influence when Cowperthwaite finally drafted his letter to Ward, a manly letter that it seemed the husband would have to be insanelly obdurate not to be convinced by. Her calm was a potent factor in the self-control with which Cowperthwaite met the almost unendurable difficulties of his position. No answer came to his letter. There was no indication in Ward's manner that he was influenced by it in the slightest. Cowperthwaite was completely nonplussed by the situation. Under a surface appearance of amity there were constantly recurring evidences of underlying antagonism. Whenever he could, Ward balked his associate's efforts to take an active part in the prosecution. Papers were withheld from him; he was left in ignorance of the policy to be followed; Ward constantly overrode, with contemptuous harshness, every suggestion that Cowperthwaite might make in court. Short of a bitter public struggle, there seemed to be no redress left for Cowperthwaite. And, having the good of their common cause at heart as he



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did, this method was out of the question. As it was, rumors that their dissension was observed came frequently to Cowperthwaite's ears. He could see the influence of the knowledge of this friction in the attitude of the other side, their growing confidence, their scarcely veiled allusions. He knew that the only hope of restoring their own failing prestige was in covering up the feud as far as possible. Nothing could be worse for them than an undignified brawl in the open court. And why should there be a feud, when Ward could surely not fail to believe his letter? Ward might be justified in feeling some passing indignation at his friend's frivolous impulse; but this deep-seated rancor seemed little short of insanity. Cowperthwaite fumed in realizing that his hands, for the moment, were tied. With his deep sense of responsibility toward the men who had placed him where he was, this conclusion was a bitter one.

With all his efforts to keep the peace, at the beginning of the third week of the trial there was a passage-at-arms between Ward and Cowperthwaite that was too vehement to escape notice. The difficulty arose over the cross-examination of a witness. There was so much personal animosity in Ward's attack that all over the court-room eyebrows were raised in surprise.

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The court ruled for Cowperthwaite. Ward subsided with the worst grace in the world. His anger smoldered down into a dark and bitter humor. At the conclusion of the day he found himself alone as he left the court-room. He had been losing ground rapidly in public opinion. Something of this had leaked through the press, until there came to be a general impression throughout the city that something was the matter with Kenneth Ward. People were beginning to leave him alone.

That evening, however, he had promised to dine with a man. He vaguely wondered why he had done so; he hardly knew the fellow. The club chosen was a rather obscure one. The man had said he "wanted to have a chance to talk quietly." Ward didn't know it, but this was one of Mayo's allies and it was Mayo who wanted to talk. The Big Man had decided that the time had come to "put it up to" the prosecuting attorney. So it happened that there was no one in the room with the two men until Mayo appeared, just after the soup.

Ward jumped up indignantly. He knew perfectly well the sinister light it would put him in to have this encounter with the Big Man known. He protested that he must leave, but the other man had invited Mayo to join them, and Mayo,

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with his authoritative eyes quietly on Ward, requested that he would remain for a few minutes. Ward wavered. A strange spiritlessness had settled over him, and he subsided into his chair with a shrug of his heavy shoulders. They talked about indifferent topics. Very soon the host slipped out with some excuse. The men were established companionably over a table, Mayo with a brandy-and-soda and Ward with a glass of seltzer. When the moments passed and the host did not return, Ward recognized that he was trapped. He glanced uneasily out into the hall, and stirred in tentative preparation for departure. Then, meeting Mayo's eyes, he smiled in half-cynical recognition of the ruse, and delayed. The room was a small, inner one used for cards. There was every probability, judging from the size of the bill that had found its way to the attendant, of its remaining untenanted, save by the two. Ward had not seen the transaction, but he would have had no difficulty in imagining it.

Mayo wasted no time:

"See here, Ward," he said, facing the lawyer steadily, "you haven't made much of a case against me, have you?"

Ward replied, with quite enough show of confidence:

"Oh, we haven't begun to get warm yet. I

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am calling the unimportant witnesses first. We have others in reserve."

"Holding, for example?" Mayo's eyes were strongly on Ward's.

"Yes, Holding among others."

Mayo changed his tactics. Indirectness was always distasteful to him. Had he been a highwayman instead of a city boss, he would have always preferred to encounter his victims face to face, with quite as much risk for himself as for them.

"What's the matter with you, Ward?" he attacked him.

Ward started; but faced the man after a moment's effort.

"What do you mean?" he demanded, indignantly. "What's wrong with me?"

"This, for one thing." Mayo's eyes held Ward's, raised in angry query. Ward's eyes wavered and fell. "That's the answer," said Mayo, quietly.

Ward colored violently as he rose from the table.

"Fortunately," he said, "court procedure is not made up of such childish tricks."

"You're right. It wasn't as clever as the bit of play you made some time back in Garvin's case. Oh, sit down, Mr. Ward, sit down," said

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Mayo, with entire good-nature. "I have more mature methods at hand, really I have." Either because of the significance in his tone, or because of the compelling force in his eyes, Ward obeyed, hating himself all the while for doing it.

"Now, see here, Mr. Ward!" Mayo dropped his light tone and spoke slowly and with emphasis. It was evident he was glad to feel the solid ground under his feet. "I have no desire to pry into your private affairs. But it's my job to observe men, you know. Of course, I've been watching you pretty constantly since the beginning of this pernicious activity of yours. I have satisfied myself that whereas Cowperthwaite and you were mighty good friends at the beginning of this high-brow campaign of yours, now you're very much the other way. I'm not inquiring what has happened to bring about this state of affairs, or what has made you, so to speak, lose your nerve. It's the mere fact that interests me, and it interests me only in so far as it gives a more favorable aspect to my case."

By this time Ward had rallied himself.

"It's hard to see the connection," he said, with a great appearance of ease.

"No?" Mayo made no attempt to press the point. "I know perfectly well," he went on, "that I'm not in the slightest danger of the peni-





JAMES HUNTERDREY, ILLUSTR.

"OH, SIT DOWN, MR. WARD, SIT DOWN," SAID MAYO





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tentiary. This one specially picked judge and jury that the Civic Club put in during its spasm of reform isn't the only court in the State or in the country, not by a jugful. And if it were, the North-Western and half a dozen other concerns I am mixed up with are not going to let me go down. But I want to get this thing over without the prolonged farce of appeals and new trials and all that. For one thing, it distresses my little girl—I don't mind telling you that."

It was curious how the bit of human appeal diffused around the two men a different atmosphere. Ward, although it did not require insight to guess what Mayo's ultimate proposition was going to be, felt his stiffened antagonism relax with the bit of domestic feeling. The man seemed less dangerous, somehow, with a daughter. Ward consented to listen, even though, after the first throb of sympathetic comprehension of Mayo's desire to shield the tender woman, the idea, as usual, brought back Ruth, with the accompanying stab of pain.

"Now, whatever may be the reason, I have discovered two facts that affect my case. One is: you come pretty near to hating Cowperthwaite. The other is: you're at discord with pretty much everything in the place. Something has made you sore, I take it. Oh, don't let us

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

take up the time now with denials. I may be dead wrong, I'm free to admit it. But just hear me through and then you can reply. To put things in a businesslike light—and, after all, all life's some kind of business—you have it in your power to do me a favor. And that favor would be worth paying for, and paying for well."

Ward half rose again, hot words on his lips. Mayo again motioned him to be seated. Ward hesitated, struggled against the force that seemed to benumb him. He glanced apprehensively around; nobody had come into the room, nobody peered at them from the corridors. But, if any one should come, it would not do to be seen there with Mayo. Finally, still with a wavering indecision, he sat down.

"You'd like mighty well to get ahead of Cowperthwaite, I take it. Well, you've got the chance. Cowperthwaite wants to convict me; for some reason, you're not so keen about it. The judge will rule according to evidence; the jury's a set of intellectual sharps—high-class business men, teachers; they're going to find according to his rulings and the evidence. Too bad, I say, that men like that won't make a business of governing their city, instead of having a fit about it once in a hundred years. Perhaps I wouldn't have to work so hard to get my parks

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and playgrounds through. Well, it's up to you. You can just give me a little advantage with the way you handle the evidence; you lose your case, to be sure, but it will hurt Cowperthwaite more than it does you. He wants a big record, something that will make the Supreme Court possible some day. Cowperthwaite, not you, is the one that has been posing as a reformer; failure here would put something in that record of his that it will take a long time to get rid of. You see, you had been uniformly successful before he was put on the cases. A good many will make the inference for you and against him from that. But, as for you—"

Ward struggled to his feet; he was shaking with indignation.

"Really, Mr. Mayo," he said, hotly, "I feel tempted to have you indicted for this attempt on me!"

One would have thought his very vehemence encouraged Mayo. He rose to his feet imper turbably. Standing, the two men could look straight into each other's eyes. They were well matched physically.

"I guess," the Big Man said, coolly, "this case against me will take precedence of any other for some time." Then his eyes narrowed. "Look here, Ward"—he drove home each word with

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

the significant emphasis he gave it—"can you tell me you wouldn't like to get away from this place, away from whatever it is that has made you sore, Cowperthwaite or some other man? To some bigger city, say, with a bigger chance?"

Ward started involuntarily. It seemed of terrible significance, somehow, that this man should voice the thought that had been tugging at him. To get Ruth away! Where she could never meet Cowperthwaite—where he would never be reminded, a hundred ugly moments in each day, that he had not killed the man! Perhaps if he went away he might shake off this strangling net that seemed to imprison him. The air might seem untainted—women pure! He recognized blindly that he was being tempted. He turned to go. "God!" he thought, running his fingers through his wild, black hair, "I would never have thought it possible. How little men know what is in them! I—with the record of my whole life clean!"

Mayo's clear voice went on, the voice that sounded so honest, somehow, in its cool, self-respecting statement of a business proposition:

"The one thing that would stand in the way of your getting away to, say, the coast, would be that you can't afford to pull up stakes at this time of your life, when you have established

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yourself here to some extent. But, with a good little capital, you can plunge right into some place where things are doing, Spokane, or farther north. Personally, I believe I'd choose Seattle. If I were a young man nothing would hold me here. There's the place for a live man—with a neat little capital, and your legal training, you could get right into the thick of things. A new place! And a new career!"

The last words seemed to be left suspended in the air. For Ward, muttering something inarticulately, his face lowering dull red, his hair tumbling over his forehead, the white lock gleaming, fairly rushed from the room.

Mayo pushed back the half-full glass before him. His keen face, even alone and unobserved, was expressionless. He sat at the table for some minutes, tapping with his pencil on a blank sheet of paper before him. He was going over in his mind each stage of the interview, each word of his own, and each tremor on Ward's face.



## CHAPTER XIX

ONE morning in the third week of Mayo's trial Cowperthwaite, glancing as soon as he entered the court-room to the place beside her father that Claire Mayo had occupied every day, found it vacant. A sudden stab of apprehension seemed to drain the blood out of his veins. "She must be ill," he said to himself, and stumbled into his seat. The next moment a tide of hot blood turned his face crimson. Then Cowperthwaite knew what had happened to him.

It was a long time before the tumult of all his being, the roaring in his ears as his blood raced by with its message, subsided enough for him to think consecutively. When he could he was lost in amazement at his own insanity. That he of all men should love Claire Mayo—of all women!

He tried angrily to shake off the conviction that had fallen about him. It was like a silk net whose meshes were fine but unbreakable; the strangling maze was about the centers of his being. "What school-boy nonsense!" he said to himself. "I'd better get that idea out of my

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

head as soon as possible. It might do some harm." But even as he was forming the thought in his mind he knew the harm was done.

Ward that morning had no need to be on the defensive. Cowperthwaite displayed no desire to meddle. Wilson had even to remind him of a small part of the prosecution that Ken had grudgingly consented to assign to him. Whenever he tried to fix his mind on the proceedings he was stopped short by this strange, paralyzing, craving need of her, need of her mere presence. As the morning wore on he had to admit that he must give up the hope of seeing her. A queer anger rose in the man. She had always been there before. Why wasn't she there then? All the force in him was centered in a passionate protest against fate. To the intensity of it, it seemed that death itself could not be more obdurate than that empty chair. Then he jeered at himself for going into hysterics over so slight a thing. But he knew all the time underneath it all that the separation of the moment was only a sign of the utter irreconcilable division between them, the grim fact that the daughter of the man whom it was his deepest conviction to fight could not have been more absolutely forbidden to him if the warning hand had indeed been Death's.

"It's sheer lunacy," he said to himself, with a

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big upheaval of his will. "I won't think of her a moment longer."

For a time his resolution held. He kept it down, this insistent need of her, need of the thought of her to nestle close at his heart, of her tranquil eyes, of her warm charm, so much more seductive because it breathed of everything that was sweet and clean in its elemental completeness. He held it down until it was a mere low, unregarded ache, humble in its lack of insistence. Then he told himself that he had conquered, his brief moment of insanity was over. He was himself again.

In this mood of triumph he leaned forward.

"I'd like a few minutes with that witness," he said to Ward, pausing to consult his notes. Even Ken's start of surprise and the ungraciousness of his assent did not perturb Cowperthwaite. He felt himself so much his own master that he could not be disturbed by lesser foes. He put his few questions tersely, tellingly. A murmur of response followed; he had scored for their side. Even Mayo marked it with a grunt of protest. Cowperthwaite's eyes were deflected to the vacant chair. "If she were here that would have hurt her," he thought, with a pang of masterful tenderness. The pitiful line of her lip when she was troubled and wouldn't show it flashed before

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his vision as clearly as if it were there, red and quivering. She was probably ill, she had been under an inhuman strain. The dull ache crashed into triumphant agony. All his brave effort was overthrown. Back it all rolled.

By the time of the noon recess he thought again he was his own master; the ache was so deceptively quiet that he didn't suspect it was a little harder. He shook off Wilson, who obviously wanted to lunch with him. As he got near the primitive café they all for some reason frequented the lawyer came across a group of Mayo's friends. His instinct was to join them. "They might say something about her," he thought, hungrily. "Mayo may have said whether she was ill." The anger at himself for his own childishness was no greater than his wrath at the fate that had made it impossible for him even to ask for her welfare. He clenched his hands as he realized that *anything* might happen to her and he not know! And the least one of Mayo's following could boldly ask about her!

Somehow the afternoon passed, an uncanny phantasmagoria to Cowperthwaite, kept in order by a painstaking effort not to show that his state of mind was anything unusual. He became crafty in hiding what he found he was powerless to prevent. It came to a time when merely not to

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turn to the man next him with her name on his lips seemed something to be proud of. When he realized that, Cowperthwaite caught himself up.

"If this keeps on I'll have to have a guardian," he muttered, grimly, to himself. But his habit of believing in himself came to the front and he laughed the panic down.

It must have been well toward the end of the afternoon when he was goaded past all endurance. It was impossible to sit still. He jumped up with a smothered exclamation. Hardly pausing to mutter something sidelong to Wilson that might be taken as an explanation, he left.

Out in the street his madness, if it was madness—he was assuring himself that it was the first moment of ordinary common sense he had ever known—persisted and grew violent. He walked the crowded streets unseeingly. His eyes were so filled with one vision, the spectacle he had conjured up of her face with love glorifying it, that he had a sense of a magnificent panorama accompanying him. The vague recollection of the quarter of the city in which Mayo lived must have unconsciously guided him. He didn't know he had directed there the stride of his glorious intoxication, but he found himself before Mayo's house.

For just one moment he raised his eyes to its



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comfortable, red-brick plainness and wondered at himself. What if some one should see him! The inference that he was in collusion with Mayo would be a perfectly natural one. It was sheer insanity for him to be there. The next instant he had rung the bell. It seemed a mysterious thing when a fresh-cheeked maid answered the door; it was more magical still when he caught the echo of his own voice asking if Miss Mayo was at home; he wondered vaguely at the worldly wisdom his hands displayed when he saw them extracting his card from a case. When, crown to all the unheard-of emotion of the day, Claire Mayo stood before him, he was too overcome by the miracle to think of one word that would fit.

Fortunately it was not necessary for him to find a topic. His coming had evidently meant just one thing to her.

“My father?” she asked, breathlessly. Then Cowperthwaite saw that she was frightened. That sobered him instantly.

“He is still in court; there is nothing wrong,” he hurried to reassure her. Then he lost himself again as he watched the faint pink come back into her cheeks.

“Then it's some good news you have come to tell me? The case is decided for him?” Her eyes sought his in the utter simplicity of their appeal.



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Her naïve ignorance of the ponderousness of court procedure brought a passing indulgent smile to his lips, then the wonder of her having found nothing inconsistent in his being the bearer of such news claimed him. He realized tenderly that it meant that somehow instinct in her had made her aware of the sympathy in him.

“Nothing happened to-day of any importance, I believe.” He spoke with some vagueness.

She looked at him rather helplessly. It was evident that her courtesy was struggling with the childish impulse to ask plainly, “Then why did you come?” He realized that, too, and smiled again with the passionate softening that any thought of the unexplored wonders of her nature seemed to bring. “Won’t you let me take your hat,” she substituted, with her little air of womanliness, “and let me give you tea?”

He assented weakly, still amazed at himself. There was an interval when it was necessary to ring and make what seemed to Cowperthwaite some very complicated arrangements. He, fortunately, didn’t have to talk much during this episode. He could watch her and so manage to get out a few phrases that would pass muster as more or less conventionally appropriate. The haze lifted long enough for him to tell himself that he certainly did need to explain this unex-

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pected and extraordinary visit of his. And there really seemed to be nothing that would explain it. Yet when she was enchantingly seated before her glistening tea equipage the one idea that obsessed him was that if he could once touch her hand, the one nearer to him that had no ring on it, every puzzle in heaven and earth would immediately be explained. And when he loosened his grasp on the arm of his chair his own hand did automatically waver toward it. That frightened him, and he incarcerated the hand in a pocket. Then the old possession of his craving to know that nothing was really the matter with her, that even though she looked so blooming there was not some insidious ailment lurking, overcame everything else. As she held out his cup to him he forgot to take it.

“You were not in court to-day—I hope you are not ill?”

Claire put the cup down; if she had not it would have fallen. All the strength had got out of her arm. Even in her lack of preparation she could not fail to see that some strong anxiety about her, strong enough to have changed the keen face she knew by heart to a mask for expressing hungry longing, had moved him.

She found, after the first instant of stupefaction, that she was not really so much surprised,

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after all. Nothing, after all, seemed more natural than that he should care; nothing that she had ever done seemed more usual than that she should sit there, in her familiar drawing-room with him, giving him the little symbol of welcome that the little tea-cup spelled. Instead of wonder a warm tide of well-being was rising in her; it fitted in harmoniously with something that lay deep in her heart, that this man should be anxious because of her absence.

"Oh no," she said, simply; "I just—didn't feel that I could go."

"Why?" He pressed the matter with a dull insistence.

She tried to answer:

"Why, sometimes it is pretty hard." Her voice failed her at the last.

That seemed to Cowperthwaite the essence of all the unbearable tragedies. He hated himself for having brought it on her. He hated the whole association that had brought that mist to her eyes.

"I'm sorry," he managed to mutter.

"Do you know, I couldn't help hoping when you came that you had somehow grown to know father better. I felt sure you wouldn't persecute any one—for, of course, this trial is just persecution—unless you really thought you were right."

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"What made you think that?" Cowperthwaite's sense of the larger issue was quite lost in the hope that she was going to say something that showed some special belief in him.

"Oh, how can I tell? It's just that one feels things. And then"—she seized on something she could quote with evident relief—"father once said that you were honest—'straight,' I think he called it. And, you know, from father that meant a great deal."

"It's all very well for her to say that," Cowperthwaite was thinking in fatuous complacency. "It was evident from the look in her eyes that she felt there was this something between us."

But she turned on him. And when Cowperthwaite saw the indignation in her flushed face he wished that he were dead.

"How can you find fault with my father? I just *have* to think that it's because you don't know. If I didn't— You don't know him. And it isn't fair to attack him unless you do. My father dishonest! He has never given his word without making it good. And he has never been disloyal to a friend in his life."

It cost Cowperthwaite a good deal to shake his head reluctantly. He felt that he had to put down his tea-cup and go. He rose.

That he should go was just the one thing that

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Claire hadn't expected. Everything seemed to be falling away from her. She had an impression that all existence would cease if he got outside the door. Desperate need requires desperate remedies. A distinctly unmaidenly impulse seized on Claire. Under its influence she looked at Cowperthwaite, deliberate petition in her eyes.

"If you only *could* understand him better! And then we could be friends!"

In spite of her petition—it would probably be more accurate to say because of it—Cowperthwaite mustered up all his reserve strength and left.

Cowperthwaite was so angry with himself at the suspicion of flight in his departure that he failed to recognize a man whom he almost ran into at the bottom of the steps. The active member of the Civic Club, whom it happened to be, looked at him in some surprise when he observed from what house he was coming and marked, in greater surprise, Cowperthwaite's lack of recognition of him and the frantic haste with which the lawyer tore down the street.

Cowperthwaite walked some blocks without any more explicit emotion than that of rage at himself. Then when, with suspicious suddenness, arguments began to push into his mind that tended to prove that Boss Mayo, after all, had



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probably done more good than harm, he awoke to the consciousness that he was being tempted.

Life had never aroused in Will Cowperthwaite any very overwhelming longing to do forbidden things. Vitally alive and young and full of healthful response to the appeal of every form of experience as he was, his mind had been, perhaps, the dominant factor with him. Therefore, beyond an occasional convivial impulse toward the glass beyond the safe one—an impulse easily dismissed—and the transient thrill from the invitation of a dallying woman's eye, he had gone free and scatheless. Fastidiousness made him invulnerable to some assaults, the rigorous moral habit of his upbringing to some others. He had never known how to be thankful for his own immunity. In decorous concert with church-going people he had begged to be preserved from a mythical temptation that had acquired a certain ecclesiastical dignity from such public, stained-glass-lighted wholesale confession. He had never really known the meaning of the word he used. He had supposed the sins he prayed to ward off had very much the same appeal to him as to others. He had rather wondered what was the use of invoking the aid of the Almighty against shadowy legions that were so easily routed by the mere exercise of a sane man's will. He



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could never have been tempted save by the greatest of all temptations. And when it came he was totally unarmed to contend with the storm of rebellion against the prohibition that had gone hand in hand with his knowledge of love for Claire.

Why, what did it matter if she was Mayo's daughter? For the first time in his man's life—no thought of Ruth came to trouble his unquestionable conclusion—he loved! He had waited for the coming of the woman. In an instant he knew every hidden beauty of her heart and spirit. It was not only that his arm tingled with the longing to just hold her. The instantaneous miracle had struck the blindness from his eyes. He saw that she had from the first moment spoken with exquisite rightness to the strange sense of knowledge that had been always his. Every atom of her body, and that only less tangible sweetness that is named spirit, was in tune with every pulsation of the consciousness that was named himself. It was achingly sweet just to think of her. God-ordained and God-appointed, their love, he had not a doubt of it. What could muddy, then, any approach that led to her?

After all, he liked Mayo. The Big Man's course was perfectly justifiable from one point

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of view. Everything in life was such a muddle of good and bad, how could any one tell what was abstractly right and what was wrong? Wasn't the life of a man like Mayo of more practical effect than a dozen of the theorists that fought against him? What of human good had he himself ever done who judged him? What action of his own life could approximate the number of families that Mayo had been maintaining—his henchmen to be sure, but receiving, in return for their allegiance, protection and safety and bread to fill the mouths at home. Look at the tired, work-worn women whose only outings were the ones that Mayo had provided. Look at the food, the work, doctor's service, nurse's care he stood sponsor for! Why, the grip of the man's hand was better than a pension! It was just a matter of adjusting his own ideas a bit, suppressing his theories. Then—for he could take care of Lyman—then the way was clear to Claire!

So far Cowperthwaite had gone before the end of his madness came. Then with a self-disgust that was intolerable he saw himself, a man ready to sell his honor for the thing he wanted.

In the revulsion of feeling that turned his face, alone as he was, a shamed red, the man knew that no happiness so tainted could be worth

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having. He knew that he could take no road to Claire that involved the dimming of the only light he had to go by. He made his decision, and he thought that fact alone would hold it.

But he found that he was only at the beginning of a strife that was new with every heart-beat. And each time he threw off the giant that attacked him his enemy picked himself up from the earth he came from and rushed at him, stronger for defeat. "Where are the men that tell you that each time you master a temptation it grows weaker?" Cowperthwaite muttered, grimly, "I'd like to have one of 'em right here now!" He felt that he was being shaken by each successive blow. So he gave up fighting and tried to walk until he was too tired to think.

Cowperthwaite never knew just where he wandered that wild night. The thought of dinner never occurred to him. It was a lovely night and moonlit. But the moonlight only served to make more bitter his own struggle, weaving madness into it with intolerable longing. The streets that he instinctively chose were mean and sordid, thronged with unwashed men and women trying to get a fresh breath of air. Miles and miles he tore along such teeming districts, ignoring his weariness, the drops that trickled

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from his burning forehead, in the attempt to outrace the thing that dogged him.

Gradually, as he flagged, from the mere exhaustion of his muscles, his mood from passion changed to a softer sadness. His eyes were opened to the sorry pageant of jaded men and women that thronged past him. Sordid and unlovely, planet-wide from the fair girl whose love he fled from, at first he felt irritatedly aloof from them. But ultimately he saw in the passing faces traces of the same forces that tore him. There was often joy in them, love for some one, jealousy, longing, sometimes despair. Often he could discern clearly the onslaughts of some temptation:

As the hour grew later it was more often that some drunkard lurched against him. At first that was only an added source of disgust, but after a time he began to wonder what made them what they were. He saw one forlorn, watery-eyed, tremulous creature walk deliberately past an open saloon door, pause, come back, walk past. As Cowperthwaite watched his struggles to withstand the curse that tugged at him, at last, for the first time in his life, he understood. "Poor devil!" he thought, with a new real comprehension. "The craving's after him. It's just a toss-up that it's something else with

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me." Then suddenly his heart opened wide with a great passion of sympathy. "So *that's* what it is to have to fight something! Can it be that the same hand sends the temptation and withholds the power to resist?"

The lurching figure wavered back, turned desperately, was going in. In the queer dream in which Cowperthwaite seemed to act apart from his own volition he reached out a forceful hand to the man's shoulder, pulled him along with him, got him into a clean eating-house he had noted. A few words, a little money—the derelict was sitting before a plentiful nourishing supper, with enough strong coffee, eating because he was told to eat. He, too, seemed to yield to something outside his own volition. That it was Cowperthwaite in this case made little difference to either man. A word or so to the not unkindly man who kept the place, some more money, and Cowperthwaite left with assurance that the waif should have shelter until he was himself again.

Out in the streets again, wondering if he could at last go to his rooms with any chance of sleeping, a sodden woman loitered past him, peering out with her hopeless, furtive, shameless eyes. And her Cowperthwaite saw with the understanding that seemed to turn always into such un-



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judging gentleness: "So *this* is what she had to meet, poor soul! Oh, *poor soul!*" And because of the bill he pressed into her hand in passing he saw that she started, looked into her hand with incredulous wonder, tried to see who had done it, then turned right about and sped with eager, purposeful feet back down the way she had come.

It was not until then that Cowperthwaite felt the storm that had raged in him for past hours sink into restfulness. Whether it was from mere bodily weariness or from some other reason, he felt very little now but peace. He could face his own rooms now and sleep. But when he was there among the familiar things that he seemed to look at as from a great distance, and sat before the window smoking a cigar before he went to bed, the thought of Ward and of Ruth swept in to destroy his new-found complacency. For the first time it came to him with full force what he had in great part been responsible for, what happiness he had been the means of destroying. He knew. More, he shook with the passion of it as if it had been his own life with Claire that had been invaded. He felt that he knew to the full what Ken had suffered. He loathed himself for the part he had played. But he stopped himself, with sane



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masculine balance, as he told himself that wrong as he had been he had at least tried to atone. He felt that he understood why it was taking Ken so long to get over his enmity. The wound had been a deep one. "Poor old Ken," he thought, with shamed tenderness, "I didn't realize. How he must have suffered!" The first glimmer of dawn, a red dawn that showed the day would be hot, reached him where he sat lost in brotherly, sympathetic schemes by which he could again be friends with Ken.

The light warned him that he must get an hour or so of sleep. But before he slept, Claire's face, momentarily pushed into the background, came back to him. In a surging up of all the power within him he vowed to himself:

"I'll not get her that way. I won't let my principles warp by a hair's-breadth. But—somehow—I'll have my girl."

For once in her life Claire had been glad that her father had a dinner engagement and that she had her evening to herself. There was something uncomfortable in the thought of meeting her father's eyes. Moreover, she seemed to have a great deal to think about that she could only think about comfortably with no one looking on.

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So instead of spending the evening downstairs, or even in her own little sitting-room, she went up to her pretty bedroom and sat in the low chair drawn up before the window with no light but that which came in from the street.

A busy street it was, much more full of drama than any withdrawn locality up-town where all the family life did not take place on front stoops in this first heat of summer. But, although her eyes were on the constant stir, she saw nothing of it. In spite of the angry clamor that arose from two different quarrels, sounds that would have troubled her yesterday, she sat with a soft, inward smile upon her lips. For one face, with just one look on it, the one that told her she was fair and that the man was hungry for the very soul of her, hung before her eyes. When she closed her eyes she could live it all, every throbbing instant of it, all over again. That glowing pageant of her fancy made all other life a shadow and every sound a far-away tinkle that she would have been impatient with had she not been able to close her ears against it.

It must have been very early when she went to bed. For she was lying with her face toward the windows, her two heavy ropes of hair flung across the pillow, when the big round moon

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looked in with a sudden plop!—as if he were surprised to find the world already lovelit. At the sight of his red face she stretched her round arms above her head with a conscious sigh. She found she had not the slightest desire to sleep; time seemed too pleasant to lose so. The wide, lace-ruffled sleeves fell away from her arms. She stretched them out before her eyes and looked at her arms—when she had pulled aside the hangings to ring for the tea his eyes had been like a kiss on them. She looked at their long, slender grace again and then folded them tight against her hot cheeks. For the first time in her life she loved the whiteness that the moon turned into something luminous. She kissed the cool, white arms on the under side, just below the elbow where the veins showed bluest; it was there that his eyes had been. And a long, delicious shiver ran all over the graceful length of her, a shiver that somehow ended with a tender sigh and a little ache in her throat that brought a soft mist of tears.

For a long time she lay there very quietly, half thinking, half merely alive to life and all its unknown joys. The something that made her so alive and so mysteriously pulsating even to the broad face of the moon, where she still could see the woman's face she had been proud to find

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in childhood, was so new that it took possession of her utterly.

When the joy had lasted just long enough to make her lightly weary, and the moon took his face from the window and left only soft, restful shadows behind, she slipped down deeper into her cool, soft pillows, said good night in her heart to the look in his eyes that said how fair she was, cuddled her cheek against the thought of him, and fell happily to sleep.

## CHAPTER XX

FROM its dawn the day was hot and sultry. Mayo's trial was nearing its close. It was Holding's turn to be brought to the witness-stand, and Holding was the last witness for the prosecution. There was a general knowledge that his testimony would convict Mayo—that is, if it was possible to have Mayo convicted. So, in spite of the heat, the court-room was more than comfortably filled with those who were not willing to miss the great day of the trial. The Civic Club was there almost in its full membership, and many other men who were in full sympathy with their crusade. These were all packed, in perspiring discomfort, side by side with Mayo's friends and henchmen, and with a smaller percentage than usual of the merely curious.

The heat and the long strain of things had given Ward a sickly pallor. His examination of Holding dragged through its perfunctory first stages. Cowperthwaite, pending the moment some point of importance would be raised,

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had all his energy concentrated on trying to keep his eyes away from Claire. This day she sat with her father. It was too near the turmoil of last night's struggle to make it safe for the attorney's eyes to meet hers.

It was a curious, ominous day, fitfully overcast, stickily hot. The low, threatening growling of thunder that seemed to crawl from beneath the edges of the clouds but never did more than threaten, the occasional tremulous flutter of lightning that tried to mask itself behind the dubious daylight, the lifeless air that once in a while gathered itself together for a vindictive gust—everything served to set nerves in uneasy vibration. Everywhere gloomy faces peered distrustfully through the creeping darkness. Cowperthwaite broke his promise to himself and let his eyes seek Claire. Her face glimmered palely through the dusky air—"too pale," the lover thought, with a pang of misgiving. She met his gaze quietly. Whether it was the prevailing tension or something in herself, he felt that there was something tragic in the calm of her eyes. Perhaps it was only that they were dark in shadow, and so changed all the expression of her face.

Cowperthwaite's eyes traveled farther. Mayo, too, sat passively, and it seemed that the lawyers



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looked resigned. One and all, they appeared to await some expected blow, realizing their own impotence. Ward's face was set in bitter lines; there was a triumphant glitter in his eye; he reddened sometimes when there was no apparent reason—it was almost a purple stain that overspread his face. Holding faced him with a meekness that Cowperthwaite fancied had something in it of the ironic; he was entirely passive. Ward alone, of all the principals, seemed charged with energy. Cowperthwaite wondered whether his letter had been effective and Ward was beginning to be himself again, and speculated how soon Ward would speak.

The examination droned on; Holding answered politely always, with all complaisance. But sometimes Cowperthwaite moved impatiently at the drift of Ward's questions. He was not always following up the line they had agreed upon together. Many of the associate's suggestions were being ignored. It was not egotism that made Cowperthwaite feel that Ken was losing by it; he was quite impersonal in his judgment; on some points Ward had always been accustomed to defer to him. Still, the relationship between the lawyer and the witness seemed to be so harmonious that the spectators became convinced that Holding would testify to the transactions

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they all knew were involved, and so practically decide the case against Mayo; they had begun to look at the Big Man with covert sympathy or open curiosity to see how he would take it. Cowperthwaite tightened his lips at the thought of what her father's ruin would mean to Claire! If Mayo was unable finally to evade punishment she would be alone, possibly, without protection!

In that moment a messenger came to him with a card which the darkness wouldn't let him read. But the boy explained obligingly; a lady wanted to see him. Cowperthwaite rose dutifully and went into the corridor; he was a little impatient at the interruption, but, at the rate things were going, it would be an hour before any crucial point was reached. Ward saw him go, and looked after him with triumphant calculation in his eye.

It developed that the lady was the wife of one of the members of the Civic Club. She explained volubly just why her husband had not been able to come; and she had sent for Cowperthwaite to see if he could get her a seat! Cowperthwaite felt some annoyed amusement at the interruption. As she was a lady who was unable to force the large flow of her language into any terseness, it took her some time to make known her purpose, and some exuberant minutes more for thanks when he had found a bailiff and turned

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the lady over to him with instructions. So he found that ten full minutes had been lost when he turned back to his seat.

But in that interval some current of strong excitement had swept over the assembly. In the Mayo camp men were shaking one another's hands in noisy congratulation. Mayo was smiling broadly. In the midst of his puzzle Cowperthwaite had time for a passing moment of delight to see that Claire was radiant with happiness. He looked toward the stand; Holding was no longer there. He looked toward his colleagues: Wilson was biting his lips in agitation; Ward sat, in what it was easy to see was an assumed calm but dark to his very forehead with the purplish tide. The judge was speaking.

"What's up?" Cowperthwaite whispered to Wilson. "Where's Holding?"

"Ward's dismissed him," muttered the poor boy, barely able to keep the tears of mortification from his eyes. "With not one blamed thing proved!"

Cowperthwaite's mind was in a maze. What was the matter? Had Ken had some new information? Why, that would lose the case for them. And they had *had* Holding! Had Ken lost his mind or only his nerve? Or, if it were any other man than Ken he would say that Mayo had him.

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That's what every one would say. What was there for him to do? Would it make it better or worse if he jumped up and demanded to have Holding brought back and so made an open scene? No, that would kill them surely. After all, it wasn't Mayo alone, it was the cause—maybe he could get hold of Ken outside and fix the thing up, and so have harmony before the world. There must be something that he didn't know. It wasn't thinkable that there was anything rotten. Oh, what, in the whole creation, was there that he could do and not make things worse?

From all points of the room rose higher and higher the murmur of excited comment, of wonder, speculations. Sometimes an indignant voice rose above the others; sometimes a cynical laugh. Cowperthwaite heard, from behind him, hardly hushed voices speculating, with some relish and amusement, as to how much Ward had bagged by the deal.

"The other man was conveniently out of the room," said a third voice, with what he felt, through every fiber of him, was a jerk of some man's chin in his direction. "I'll bet you they are all in the same boat. Of course, Mayo would get them in the end." An angry flash of lightning made a woman scream; in truth, it did seem to be

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in the very room. In the quiet that followed Judge Barnard's voice was heard, sternly demanding order. The wind rose while all eyes were turned toward the windows, fascinated with expectation of the violence that was coming. Men's voices were stilled in apprehension. Some started for the doors. Judge Barnard was understood to be dismissing court and announcing that the prosecution would begin its argument on the morrow. Nobody was interested, for it was apparent to all that, Holding dismissed, no case had been made against Mayo; the arguments were a mere matter of routine. With the noise of departure, sharply questioning voices raised to dominate the confusion, eager demands for cabs and taxis, the noise of the down-pouring rain, everything was tumult and confusion. And then a deafening crash of thunder shook the building, and after it the rain itself seemed to thunder as it crashed down in torrents.

While the crowd was still massed about in dark and brooding indecision, Ward left his place and started to make his way through it to his office in the corridor opposite. He did not need to push himself; every one fell away before his approach. Men pressed aside and left an avenue for him to walk in, while they looked at him with eyes that were at once curious and scornful. Not



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a man of them all hailed him, nor did any woman meet his eye to claim acquaintance. The dark flush ebbed away and left his face strained into grayness. They still watched him as he found his office and shut the door against them. Cowperthwaite felt as he followed—though not beyond that closed door—that the stigma had fallen upon him also. With a momentary recurrence of his curious, impersonal detachment he remembered his query of some weeks back as to how far the crowd would stand for dishonesty. This answered it, then. Ward's treachery had reached the point beyond which the sympathy of the mob would not go. Admiration for the clever liar was a surface lightness. Underneath was the demand for straight dealing. When Cowperthwaite, too, had disappeared, the crowd broke into loud and stormy comment.



## CHAPTER XXI

COWPERTHWAITE had but one thought: to follow Ward home and denounce him for his treachery. His own new-found love with its tragedy, his old friendship, his just-vowed sympathy for Ken, and comprehension were all forgotten or remembered only to add new bitterness to the rage of indignation that consumed him. For now there was no escaping the conviction of Ken's guilt. The almost personal shame of his friend's betrayal roused Cowperthwaite to an ungovernable fury.

"He has sold us out, *Ken Ward*—the cur! Sold us out to Mayo! We'll be a stench in the nostrils of every straight man in the town! And the other kind will laugh at us. Why did I never know that there was that streak of yellow in him? I could have understood anything else. But this—when there was no other bait but money! When Mayo himself wouldn't have been guilty of it! At least, he has always been true to his friends. The chance of a lifetime to clean up the city lost because Mayo found that Ken Ward

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had his price and paid it! I ought to be batted for not having prevented it. But who on earth could have conceived it possible? Of course, they'll kick us both out—I swear it'll be good riddance. But that won't help matters now. Oh—damn it all!—the *cause!*”

Cowperthwaite, plunging through the blinding torrents, dug his fingers into his head and shook it in his despair. When he got off the car at the Wards' corner, he was infuriated to find that the hard-wrung tears of rage were in his eyes.

At the Wards' house the maid who admitted him said that Mr. Ward had just gone to his study. As Cowperthwaite had long had admittance at all hours, under all circumstances, she evidently expected him to find his way unusherred so she could get back to her dinner-table. The door was open, and Cowperthwaite walked in.

For a moment he was halted by seeing Ruth there. It was evident that Ward had just come in; his hat was thrown on the desk. But Cowperthwaite had little thought to spare for Ruth.

“What I've got to say is for your own ears, Ward. I think Mrs. Ward would better leave us.”

When neither acted on his suggestion, he shrugged his shoulders.

“Of course you know you've lost the case for

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us. What did you get from Mayo for selling us out?" he demanded, without preamble.

Ward straightened himself with the joy of the coming fight.

"I've not had a red cent from Mayo," he said, in a hushed voice. "But I'd knock you over with the greatest pleasure."

Ruth, feeling that Ken was being shamefully attacked, sprang to support him. She stood by her husband's side, her hand on his arm, facing Cowperthwaite.

Again neither man heeded her.

"Well, then, how much has Mayo promised you?" Cowperthwaite now had the calm of absolute indignation in his tone.

Ward was throwing caution to the winds. What did he care how soon the man knew what he had done? It was joy to let his hate have breathing-space. But Ruth's hot anger mastered her.

"How *dare* you, Will Cowperthwaite? Ken"—she turned to her husband with pride in her face—"you will know how to answer a charge like that. But please make him go *now!*"

Her husband gripped her arm until he hurt her.

"So you side with me, after all!" he said, with fierce exultation. The lawless passion within him flamed up. "After all," it said, "I believe

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I care more—this way. You prize a woman when it's a fight to hold her! At least, there's no monotony!" He laughed aloud at his thought—an ugly laugh. "Well, that's worth it all!" he said to his wife. Everything had gone out of his face but the triumph of the brute sense of possession.

Ruth shrank from him. Cowperthwaite broke into her hurt wonder.

"What's the use of fencing, Ward?" he demanded, brusquely. Ward's manner outraged all that was fine in Cowperthwaite, and sympathy with Ruth added to his indignation. "The thing's clear. You sold us out. That means, you've sold every decent creature in the city, betrayed the men that trusted you, made it impossible for years to come to have anything but viciousness raise a voice. Oh—" He clenched his hands in the despair of utterance. "I thought it would be some satisfaction to shout it all out to you. But now I've got here, I can't think of anything that seems to unload the thing that's choking me. All there is to it is, you did it!" He walked a step nearer to where Ward stood locked in a fierce sort of control that was more hot than ranting. "Have you been that sort all along, Ken? *What made you do it?*"

Ward, too, took a step forward. Ruth clung

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to his arm; she had forgotten everything but the insult to her husband.

"Don't kill him, Ken!" she said, in her exultant confidence. "He isn't worth it!"

But her husband barely heard her. He was facing Cowperthwaite at last. All of the hate he had been forced to crowd down was rising until the man was beside himself with the intoxication of its freedom.

"And if I did!" He was smiling. "Of course you know the reason. No? Such innocence! The price was large enough to carry us away a good safe distance—far enough, in fact, to get my wife away from you forever!" For a moment he stood nodding in a sort of evil confidence at the man who had been his friend.

For the moment Cowperthwaite was completely puzzled at his manner. Neither man noticed that Ruth had fallen back, stricken. For the moment she heard nothing that was passing.

"What!" Cowperthwaite began, indignantly, but lowering his voice carefully. "You still believe that! When I wrote you—" But the gathered storm of Ward's hard-held fury broke:

"Do you imagine I'd read a word from you when my wife had spoken? I tore up every damned word of it just as I'd smash her name

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on your lips. And now, what have you the right to say about my affairs if I had stolen the bread from the mouths of foundlings? You! You! To come here to charge me with dishonor! What have you done to this house that you have dared to enter? You found faith, peace, love in it. And all three you—stole!”

Cowperthwaite was stunned at his failure to enlighten Ward. He was silent while he wondered whether there were any words that would serve. But a cry came from Ruth as Ken's meaning again stabbed at her. She stared at him unbelievably, with the horror bitten into her white face. Her husband saw it. He turned to the other man, accusing him of what he saw.

“You wouldn't think she had cheated, would you? See her righteous horror! She is judging me!” His voice broke; but he attacked Cowperthwaite again with added fury: “I had given you my friendship. I trusted you as one honest man thinks he can trust another. I bid you enter my home and met you with my wife beside me. And you stole! Whatever I have done—and I contend I was justified in doing anything to put an end to weeks like these that I have lived through—nothing could weigh a feather against the thing you did. It goads me almost past the possibility of any endurance that I should have



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to hear you assume the right to judge me, when it's only by my mercy that you draw the breath you use—”

Ruth's voice made its way through his. It was hardly to be heard, and yet it stayed both men. What was in it neither knew, but that something demanded hearing:

“Do you quite know what you are saying? Will you say clearly just what it is with which you charge Will Cowperthwaite and myself?”

The man's face was pitiful to see as he turned to meet hers. The concentrated rage was still in it, but undermined, shaken, with longing and despair.

“Why do you force me—you know it nearly kills me to say the words—and you know already—”

“Still, put it into words.” Her voice was absolutely steady. It roused a fleeting anger against her in her husband.

“Then, since you will have it, I cannot even be in doubt of the very night he stole you from me.”

“‘Stole’,” pursued the voice. “That's capable of misinterpretation. This time I want to understand thoroughly. Do you mean by it that he stole my ‘affection’?” It was true that a faint smile strained her lips apart. “Or do you mean

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he stole that one possession that you men think it worth while to wrangle over—my honor as a wife, my—”

“For God’s sake!” broke in Cowperthwaite, desperately. But Ward pushed him aside with a touch that was a blow, and fronted her.

“Yes,” he said, furiously. “That! What else?”

She turned to Cowperthwaite.

“Did you know that that was what my husband understood?” she asked. His silence was his answer. “And you have let him think so?”

Cowperthwaite couldn’t speak. All at once the attempts he had made seemed pitifully faint-hearted beside her need. He turned his face away from her questioning eyes.

She lifted her arms in despairing appeal to something. Then she wrapped her face in them, cowering against the wall, as far away as she could get from them both—

“Oh!” she cried, chokingly. “Oh!—*Men!*”

The silence was so absolute that both men heard her breathing through some minutes. For the first time, too, the sound of the pouring rain was evident. At the end of the time she dropped her arms and stood straight, facing them both.

Her white face was drained of all the youth that had been in it. Her lips were calm; there

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was not even bitterness in them. Her face was drawn into the inexorable lines of justice. It was only the intolerable cold brightness of her eyes that was alive. Her close-massed hair was a dull bronze helmet. And to her husband the truth of her innocence could not have been more fixed had she had the revelation of an archangel to proclaim it.

At the knowledge the unclean spirit went out of him. She did not hear the groan with which he turned away. Her eyes first went to Cowperthwaite.

“Now—I think there is no more harm you can do; your work here is finished. You can go.”

Her tone was quiet, almost courteous. The scene had snatched all of Cowperthwaite's indignation against Ward from him. He didn't dare to look at her; he couldn't meet Ken's eyes. Any attempt to explain his own action at this moment would be an impertinent intrusion. The issue was between Ruth and her husband. Ruth watched the man while he caught up his hat and went out through the open door.

She turned toward her husband.

“How far are you committed to Mayo?”

He answered automatically:

“Not at all as to words or writing. I haven't

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had anything from him. I was beginning to earn it. I was ready."

She nodded.

"I don't know, of course, just what happened to-day. But I feel sure you can pull yourself together again. You'll atone."

If he hadn't known her so well he might have drawn some hope from her strong belief in him. But he couldn't move a step toward her. Her anxious conscientiousness struck him with foreboding. He listened.

"I have known for a long time something was coming. I have tried to watch and do what I could. But I couldn't understand what was the matter. Once I had a passing fear that it was this. But it seemed too monstrous—I couldn't believe it of you—I put the thought out of my mind. Sometimes I was convinced you were going to be ill, some nervous breakdown. There has not been a day that I have not started at every ring of the bell. I didn't know what I feared. Sometimes I was afraid it was your mind—I didn't know what to expect, but I knew some day there was going to be a crash. And I want you to know that I was ready to be loyal to you through everything—nurse you, feed you, if necessary, be mind for you if yours went. 'Ready'? There wasn't even the question. I

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was almost joyous at the thought that the time was coming when you would need me absolutely. It—it would be lovely to have something to take care of. Even to-day, by the time I had understood what you had done, I had already planned a lifetime with you under the shadow of it, helping you struggle through to the top again in spite of it. There is nothing I could not have forgiven. Nothing except this.”

Ward drew a long breath. He loosened his collar as if it strangled him.

“It wasn’t so much that you could have thought me guilty.” Still there was no feeling in her manner other than that desire to state each thought in her mind most clearly. “Although once I would have thought that that would be the unforgivable thing. But I can be reasonable. I can see, in looking back over it, that you didn’t believe it until my own words had convinced you. I never dreamed, of course, that it was in the range of possibility. It was so completely unthinkable; words seem to mean such different things—I was just dull and stupid. Do you want to know what it was all about?” He shook his head. Still she insisted. “It was a silly kiss. He lost his head a minute—we had been talking of old times. And I was so outraged over it.” She smiled a little pityingly. “I remember that

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I made an awful fuss. That must have been in my mind—I have almost forgotten how it happened. But that must have been why you understood—”

“*Don't!*”

She looked with some surprise at the pain in his face. Then, obediently, she left the subject. “It wasn't that so much. At least, the other thing is so much greater.” She took up her task again, her blue eyes, starry and wonderful and true, on him, their beauty a fresh wound.

“When I gave myself to you, Ken, I gave myself in all completeness—heart, soul, body—all for you, to mate with yours. The inviolate faith and love between us was my shelter. It was the ring of fire about us, made rapture holy. I could give myself because you gave the highest. Women like me don't give themselves for less. Now—oh!—*can't* you understand?—with one link in our sanctuary chain broken life with you is a horror. There may be women that can endure that. But not I!”

She turned on him in accusing passion. All her face flashed into splendor. Lips were red now, a fierce red, her eyes burned, as she moved her head the red gold in her hair sent out gleams.

“What have you made of me, Ken Ward? It would have been decent to have killed or left



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me. But to *keep* me with that shame between us! What have you done to our love that was so beautiful? What have you done to every hour of joy that was between us? You have made a shame of every kiss I gave you! And I can't bear being shamed! I can't! I can't! You have sinned against the faith I gave you! You have desecrated every still thought of worship that I've held for you! I've lived beside you all these weeks when the holy thing had gone out of your love for me—I've lived *with* you. *What have you made of me, Ken Ward?* What's the *name* you men brand women with when you've made us what you want? *That's* what you've done to me. And I'll never forgive it—never! You have cheated me into being unclean! I couldn't forgive you if I wanted to!"

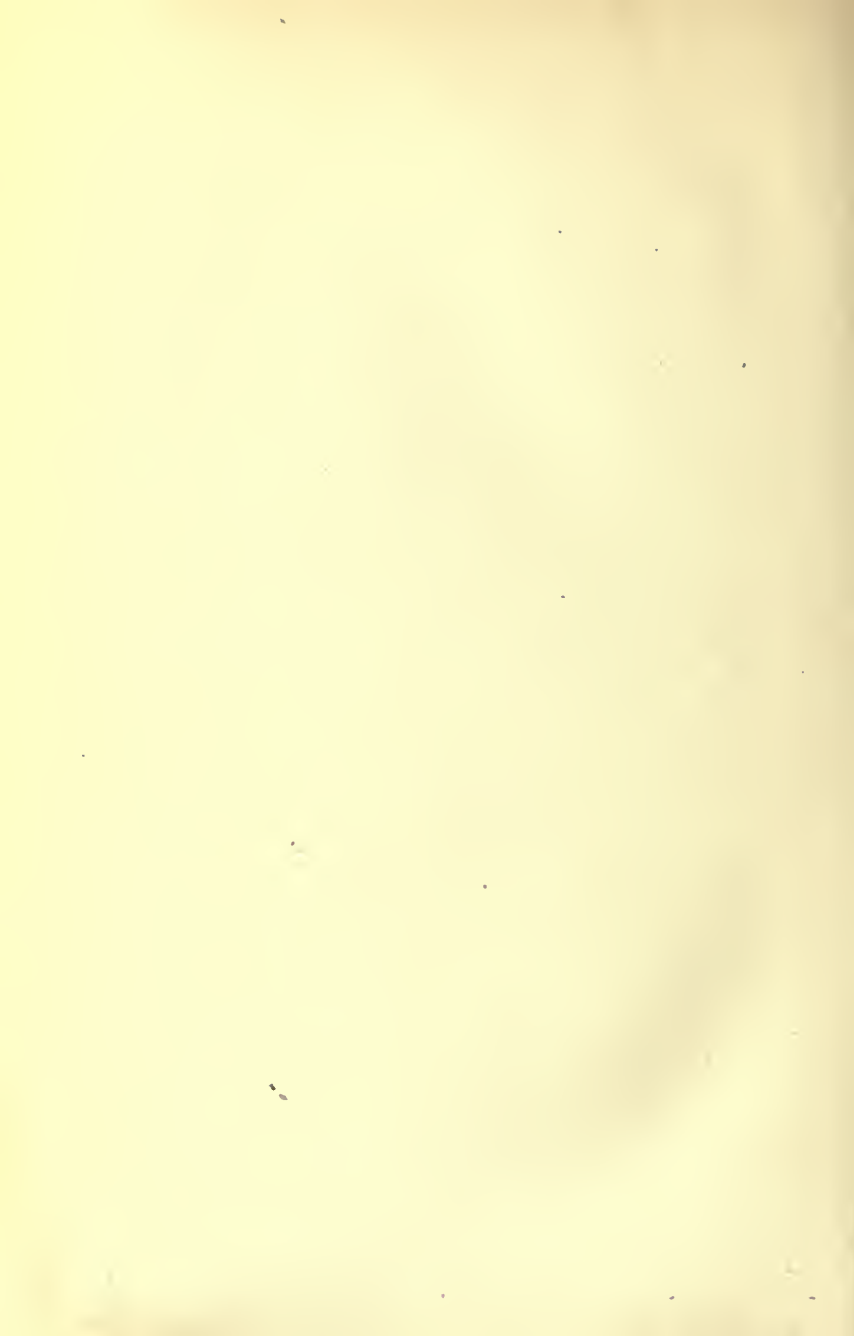
She struck herself fiercely across her breast. And then, for the first time, her cruel passion broke. She threw herself down by Ken's big chair, buried her head and shoulders on the deep, kind arm of it, and broke into frantic weeping that tore her from head to foot with the birth of every strangled sob.

That was too much for endurance. Ward bent over her, trying to raise her, with murmurs of heartbroken tenderness, forgetting everything but the need of giving her comfort. She



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

SHE CRIED OUT AND SHIVERED AWAY FROM HIS TOUCH



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cried out and shivered away from his touch. Then Ward was constrained to let her be, looking at his big arms wonderingly, understanding dimly that the very kind strength of them that longed to serve her he had somehow made an insult of, to brand her again with her shame. And the unsatisfied craving of his desire to help her turned into an eating poison that seemed to worm its way, with agony unthinkable, into that place where his heart beat in dull suffering, but unalterably, for her. So he folded his arms across his great chest and waited, holding down his longing with dogged patience, until she should, of her own unaided strength, recover herself and tell him what was to be.

It was not so very long before the moment came. She struggled to her feet, turned from him while she dried her eyes—that hurt him more than all her wild words put together. Then she was calm again and more still than ever.

“There is only one thing to do. I can't have the best, so I'll have nothing. I am going home to my own people—”

He sprang forward. It was the great, passionate onrush of all his being.

“You shall not!” he said, between his teeth. Then he saw the look in her eyes. He stopped,

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forced all the gigantic male rebellion in him into subjection. The pause was a short one. But in it the new man was born. The sweat came out on his forehead as he said:

"I have lost the right to forbid you."

Then a tinge of color came into her face, and she said, proudly:

"That was splendid of you, Ken. You were always big."

He was moved to a moment's hopefulness:

"Haven't you any mercy for me, Ruth?"

She was remote from him again.

"I don't think you want my mercy. I can think of one thing at a time only. And now, it's odd to realize that the one thing isn't you. It's myself now. I'm going to belong to myself."

After that she did not once look at him where he stood, immovable, while she walked to the door, and so up the stairs to her own room. There was the sound of light footsteps stirring hastily while Ward waited and listened, with every beat of his heart suspended, it seemed. At last he heard the footsteps returning, down the stairs, to the hall outside. A pause—then she entered. She was dressed for the street, and carried a hand-bag.

"Good-by, Ken. I'm going." She faced him

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with that wonderful composure. He had become as quiet. He held her with his eyes.

“Whatever you do— You know me, I’m unchangeable.” She bowed her head and turned to go.

Her husband passed her with a low “Pardon,” and opened the inner door for her—the outer door. He held it open while she went by him.



## CHAPTER XXII

“COME out of the crowd, Ken. Wilson can attend to everything necessary now,” said Cowperthwaite, suddenly. “You’re pretty much all in.” He had been watching the other man’s face for half an hour before the verdict was announced, and the evidences of exhaustion alarmed him. A certain sensitiveness to the moods of others was growing on Cowperthwaite. With his arm around Ward’s shoulder he drew him across the corridor and into the office-room.

Ward threw himself on the leather-covered couch and closed his eyes. For a time neither man spoke. Past the door streamed the noise that was testimony to the size and excitement of the dispersing crowd. They both found themselves curiously indifferent to it. Cowperthwaite was thinking that it was the first time of their lifelong acquaintance that he ever remembered to have seen Ken voluntarily inactive. During the almost unendurable heat of the summer recess and the October days of Mayo’s second

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trial his exertions had seemed superhuman. Now he was beginning to show the effect of it. He had lost much weight, particularly during the last week. His large features stood out with startling strength. They were gaunt and powerful; the unalterable purpose in them seemed almost a magnetic force.

"It's been a great day for you, Ken," Cowperthwaite said. He pulled a chair nearer and sat companionably by his friend. Since Ward had called Cowperthwaite to him, not many hours after Ruth had left, and they had begun their campaign to undo what Ward had done, the tie between the two men had been incomparably stronger than ever. There were moments in the self-revelation that each man had made of himself to his friend that had established that time forever as one of the great epochs by which men shape their lives. Cowperthwaite was thinking of the long struggle they had lived through together. "I'll admit now," he said, comfortably, "that I never imagined it possible that you could win."

"There never was any question of its being 'possible.' It was my one chance to make good, and I had to do it." Ward turned his head away and added, in a half-stifled voice, "I am sure Ruth expected me to."

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Cowperthwaite held silence for a minute, and then he said, hesitatingly:

"I beg your pardon for speaking of it, Ward. You can put me to the door if you like, but—have you had any word from her?"

Ward shook his head stolidly.

"No, nor will I. It's final."

Cowperthwaite showed his wretchedness.

"I hate myself for the part I played in it," he said, in a low voice. "I don't see how you can tolerate me."

"Oh, as for that"—Ward spoke with a sort of grim indulgence—"there was precious little to choose between us. I don't feel qualified to throw stones. And there's no use making the world a more uninhabitable place than it already is." His tone was the reverse of emotional. But he put out a big, tired hand and gripped Cowperthwaite's. "We'll hang together after this."

There was a period of silence while the loud tide of enthusiasm, fury, congratulation on the other side of the door passed them by.

"All the same," Cowperthwaite said, finally, "it seems to me that you've done the super-human thing."

"I'd have gone mad if I hadn't been able to work like the devil," was Ward's only reply.

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He lapsed into a long silence. But thought was busy in him. He moved his head uneasily, and finally turned on his side to face Cowperthwaite. "I take it, Will"—his wearied voice had taken on some tone with his earnestness—"that the office of fellows like me, that have cast for their stake of personal happiness and lost, is to lead the forlorn hope, take the desperate chance. The world can't stop us. We're the preordained workers—for good or bad, the worker-bees of the hive—"

"What's the use of talking like that, Ken?" Cowperthwaite was rebellious. "You haven't lost her. This is just a temporary phase. She'll come back. Why, man, she loves you so absolutely that nothing could hold her away, once the first shock has passed—"

"No, you're right; nothing could hold her away," Ward broke in with a slow smile; "nothing but herself. No, I tell you, something's shattered. It would take the impossible to bring her, something that would change her whole point of view. And I swear, as heavily as it bears on me, I'm proud of her steadfastness." The forced cheerfulness of Ward's face made Cowperthwaite frown with the fear that he himself was going to feel too much emotion. "But, there! I didn't mean to go off on that tack.

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I was just trying to make my own position clear. I must be a broken reed, all right. For when I thought ill of her, my belief in every form of goodness went. And now that I know her as she is, the moral balance is restored. That's all. And I don't know but I'm the happier, after all. She's gone. But my knowledge of her is *here*, right with me every minute. And the certainty of her upright standards, the hope that she believes that I can make good again—for she did believe it—is the power that moves me. I can feel it in every step, the knowledge that I can't fail. How can I fail when there, at least, she's with me?—the pillar of cloud and fire before me. I had my experience of the other side, having her, when my belief in her was gone. It was as near an approach to hell as I want. I'd rather want her every instant and know her as she is! It's a desolate enough world I was born into that night she left me, but I swear it's a cleaner one. And I have a suspicion that it's all making something of me." His face glowed for a moment, and then the exaltation of the mood dropped from him. He jumped up and paced the room desperately. "What rot I'm talking!" he groaned. "The cost, man!—the cost!"

Cowperthwaite got hold of him and pulled him down again.

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"Oh, *rest*, confound you!" he said, earnestly. "Haven't you got sense enough to know when you're tired? You know that doctor that comes down to the club told you to go straight home after court to-day, didn't he? This isn't quite the end, you know; we have some more little jobs ahead of us." He had got Ward on the couch again. "Of course, Mayo's entered a plea for an appeal by this time. I suppose Judge Barnard will have to grant it."

Ward nodded indifferently.

"Yes, they'll know how to put it up to him so he can't refuse. Of course, Mayo 'll be admitted to bail, and I doubt if he ever gets within a hundred miles of the penitentiary. Convicting him has done the job for the city, all the same. And by the time we get hold of some of the others—" His voice ended with a tired sigh.

"Oh, *rest*, you heathen, you," said Cowperthwaite, heartily, his cheerfulness heightened by the reassurance as to the fate of Claire's father.

He pulled the proof of a brief toward him and went to work in ostentatious silence. Ward smiled slightly, and shut his eyes again to lessen the confusing sensation of pressure in his head. But Cowperthwaite broke his own injunction by bursting out:



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"I'm still lost in wonder over Remsen. When we swore out the second indictment in the Garvin case on the plea of new evidence I shook in my shoes; I don't see how you ever frightened him into telling the whole story. When we caught him at the boat I couldn't find a trace of anything to appeal to in him. How did you ever get hold of him? I don't believe Remsen ever did a hand's turn in his life before but for a price."

Ward's face became more grim.

"I don't advise you to learn how to deal with Remsen's like as I did. It was nothing but that I had been wallowing in the mud he was used to. I knew how it felt. I had touched bottom. And, judging like by like, I inferred that he wasn't particularly happy being despatched like contraband goods from port to port. You know a man out of the struggles of your own soul. Anyway, it turned out that Remsen had his unexpected Achilles-heel of righteousness. And the hell that I'd been in at least told me how to aim for it. Moreover, it had to be done."

The door opened, and Mayo came in with his senior counsel.

The lawyer made his way toward Ward, who sat up dazedly in the attempt to give his attention to his question. Mayo was left a little

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apart. Cowperthwaite and he were far enough from the others to be out of ear-shot.

In the surprise of the moment the Big Man's presence meant one thing only to Cowperthwaite—Claire. All of his painful passion of concern, only half subdued by the excitement of their victorious day and by fellowship with Ward, boiled up. The man who stood there, looking tranquilly at him, was no longer the civic menace they had been fighting. Cowperthwaite's work there was done. Now he could think of Mayo as the father of the girl he loved. Mayo's bearing only made the impression stronger. The man, it is true, lacked his florid color. But he was certainly neither crushed nor shamed. The smile with which he met Cowperthwaite's gaze was even a little quizzical.

"Where is she?" Cowperthwaite had asked the question before he knew he was going to speak. And Mayo was evidently in no doubt whom he meant. For he answered, with some amusement:

"Home, I hope. I sent her off some time ago."

The maddest impulse mounted to the lawyer's brain. The thought of Claire as she might be if Mayo were unable to ward off punishment alone, with no one to shield her, was of such

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mighty import that it drove out every other consideration. What difference did it make what Mayo was, or that he himself had had all his energies engaged in trying to jail him. Nothing but the human relationship stood. He was Claire's father, and Cowperthwaite was just beginning to realize how much he loved her.

"I want to—to care for her. Can I have her? I love her!" he had stammered out, before he recognized the enormity of such a plea at such a time.

But there was nothing to show that Mayo was unprepared. He stood for some minutes in silence, looking searchingly at Cowperthwaite. The younger man felt that he was being weighed, analyzed, his depths sounded.

"No," Mayo said, with final curtness. And Cowperthwaite felt, before he was conscious of any other emotion, a sharp twinge of chagrin that he had been found wanting.

Then he realized the absurdity of expecting Mayo to say anything else.

"Of course I recognize it must seem the height of folly to expect you—"

The Big Man interrupted:

"I don't give a"—he hesitated, with his chronic difficulty to find a strong enough expression that should yet not be profane—"I

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don't give a red-headed monkey about your being on the other side from me, you know. That isn't the difficulty. Events haven't led me to be so cock-sure of my own side." He smiled ruefully, but with disarming frankness. "Lyman's disloyalty hasn't altogether convinced me that we've always got the best kind of men in our own lines."

Cowperthwaite gasped with the glimpse of hope that came to him:

"Well, then." He had begun when Mayo silenced him.

"And, although I'm in no fear of the penitentiary, I wouldn't be sorry to have my little girl tucked away in some safe corner in case anything did happen to me. We're pretty much alone in the world, she and I. I believe you love her. And I think she's not averse to you. Oh, I've had my eyes open! I'd like to know she was safe with an honest man—as Lyman isn't. You saw what a—a—" This time the struggle for adequate expression was a desperate one. But a recollection of his bucolic boyhood came to his relief. "You saw what a perniciously active skunk of a turncoat he is!"

"He began to trim the minute Ward shook the 'perjury' bogy at him! That's made me think. I believe I'd give her to you, and let

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people scrape their throats talking about it, if it wasn't for one thing. I won't give her to any man who can't show a clean life." He fixed his terribly penetrating blue eyes on Cowperthwaite. They bored down to his soul. Dazed, half comprehending as he was, Cowperthwaite thought just once that it was lucky he hadn't anything particularly black on his conscience.

"But there's that matter of Ward's wife against you."

"Don't say a word against her." Cowperthwaite forgot that he had a personal stake. He was indignant at the man's assailing a woman. "She's the most innocent and the most upright and the finest woman!" he had said, hotly, when the nonplussed expression on Mayo's face struck him.

"You look mighty honest," the Big Man mused. "But of course you'd have to deny it. You'd deny it if you were only a gentleman and shielding her, or if you were guilty and shielding yourself. You'd say that if you were innocent or if you were a light-minded Johnny with humorous views of the Ten Commandments. If my suspicions are true, you're bound, all the more, to lie convincingly—and you'd deserve to be horsewhipped if you wouldn't. You must admit I'm up against it— No, the only guide to follow in such a case is your own observation and

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your own judgment. I've been watching Ward, of course. That's my job. I've seen this enmity between you. You let something drop once. I have drawn my own conclusions. And this matter of Ward and his wife having separated only confirms it. No, you can't have my little girl when you have that stain on you. She shall have nothing but the best."

Cowperthwaite drew a long breath. He recognized the difficulty of the situation. And that his own fault had created it made him none the more inclined to accept it patiently.

"Do you mean to say that for a mere suspicion, a suspicion that I give you my word is absolutely without foundation, and for no other reason whatever, you refuse your daughter to me?"

"Yes," said Mayo, baldly. "Just that."



## CHAPTER XXIII

THE two visitors had gone, and Ward had thrown himself down on the couch again with the limpness of exhaustion, when a messenger boy brought a note. It was for Cowperthwaite, and Ward motioned the boy to where his friend sat, lost in somber thought. Cowperthwaite read it indifferently, and then flipped it into the wastebasket. Ward was roused by the noise the boy made in closing the door, and turned to see Cowperthwaite reaching for his hat.

“What’s up?” Ken asked, languidly.

“Oh—just Reynolds, who wants to see me at the club. Says he’ll be there at four; I’ve hardly time to get there.”

“I’ll go with you,” said Ward, pulling himself together and struggling up from the couch. “I want to ask Reynolds a question—ought to know what he thinks about it to-day.”

“You ought to rest, Ken,” Cowperthwaite protested. But when Ward insisted rather irritably, his friend shrugged his shoulders with resignation

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and led the way through the now almost empty corridor to where his motor waited.

Two other men besides Reynolds were in the card-room at the Civic Club, and they all three wore rather exceptionally serious faces. Reynolds had always been one of Cowperthwaite's closest friends. When he saw Ward's big figure behind Cowperthwaite Reynolds objected immediately.

"This matter concerns Mr. Cowperthwaite only," he said, quickly. "We must ask Mr. Ward to let us thrash the matter out without him."

But Ward made no move; something made him feel that Cowperthwaite was under fire.

"Has this anything to do with the cases?" he asked.

"Yes, it has," answered Reynolds, shortly.

"Then I think I ought to be included. Mr. Cowperthwaite and I have been acting in entire harmony—"

"Are you quite sure of that?" asked Fillebrown, the second man, with some careless amusement in his tone.

"That statement is correct, as to recent events at least," Ward replied to him, imperturbably. "Since the time when I had some informal conversation with various gentlemen of your organization relative to my action in the trial, it is absolutely correct. At that interview I think I

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remember I was requested to consult the associate counsel more constantly with regard to the policy of the prosecution. I was given to understand that you unqualifiedly indorsed him. I have followed those suggestions. Therefore, if you are now inclined to criticize him at any point, I assuredly am responsible with him. I ask to be allowed to reply, with him, to any charges you may have to make."

Ward stood his ground in such perfect assurance that he would have his way that, after some hesitation among the gentlemen, he was allowed to stay.

"Now, may I ask what charge has been made against me?" Cowperthwaite demanded, with his convincingly straight gaze.

"It can hardly be called a 'charge,' Mr. Cowperthwaite." Reynolds smiled at him in anxious friendliness. "It's only that, having insisted on your being associated in these cases, we are naturally sensitive to any criticism of you. It may be that there has been a mistake in identity. And, in any case, it is a point that you will doubtless be able to explain to our entire satisfaction. In fact, it is only by implication that it is of importance—"

"May I ask what this much-introduced incident is?" Cowperthwaite asked, smilingly.

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“In last June—on the 28th, wasn't it, Fillebrown?—you were seen coming out of Mr. Mayo's house in the afternoon.”

Cowperthwaite started violently. The implication of the challenge was lost to him for the moment in the disarming wave of emotion at the recollection of that day, which still stood alone in his memory; he was again himself at flood-tide. How bitter had been the daily struggles since then, when he had downed his craving to follow that same path only by stern insistence on the indecency of his troubling her! He looked at these men who awaited his answer; the expectation, varied in each face, that he could explain the motive of his manifestly compromising visit greeted him. Ward's surprise had been evident only for a moment; his confident assurance would have given strength to a weaker man than Cowperthwaite. “Good old Ken!” thought his friend, still too full of emotion to feel that this inquisition had any serious bearing. So the cheerful tone with which he spoke must have seemed dangerously near bravado:

“I did call at Mr. Mayo's residence at the date you mention.”

“I am afraid we must ask for an explanation of your motive.” Reynolds's tone was a little

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sharper. "I did not know that you and Mr. Mayo had been personal friends."

"We are not. I went to see his daughter." Cowperthwaite's head was high. "And—with her permission—I shall go again!"

There was a stir among his auditors.

"Did it not occur to you that any social relation with the family of the man whom we had employed you to prosecute was in distinctly bad taste?" Reynolds's tone had become severe.

"I cannot say that, at that moment, I had considered that phase of the matter," Cowperthwaite answered, smiling.

"You surely could not fail to see that your action would give rise to the gravest suspicions, especially since, at that time, you had been a mere figure-head in the prosecution."

"I might assume that my friends would give me credit for a principle or so." Cowperthwaite still smiled, but his level gaze at Reynolds was disconcerting.

"Don't you understand the position you are putting yourself into, Mr. Cowperthwaite?" put in Fillebrown, testily. "We haven't any business with convictions as to a man's honesty here. We have to look for a man who will secure certain results. We can't feel full confidence in you. And we can't employ a man in

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whom we haven't full confidence, especially in a matter of this kind, where every man concerned has got to be subjected to the severest scrutiny from all those affiliated with Mayo's machine. Why, man, if they can pick the smallest flaw in the record of any one of us his usefulness is destroyed!"

Reynolds met Cowperthwaite's eyes in a long look that had a good deal of sadness at the bottom of its scrutiny.

"As Mr. Fillebrown says, if we have not full confidence in you, your usefulness with us is impaired. I regret—"

"I refuse to consider that you speak for the whole Civic Club." Cowperthwaite's temper was rising. "And I refuse to resign under fire. I make the statement that my admiration for Mr. Mayo's daughter has not influenced my judgment of him or my action in the prosecution. But if you cannot accept my statement you must do as you think best."

The three men were becoming heated. "Then we shall be forced—" Fillebrown had begun, when Ward, who had not spoken before, claimed their attention:

"I was in entire ignorance of the matter of which you are speaking. And I am all the more amazed at the absolute integrity of Mr. Cowper-



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thwaite's attitude. From the beginning he has been single-minded in his determination to secure the success of the prosecution. If he had personal friendship at stake, he is certainly to be admired for the way he has absolutely disregarded it. I'd—"

He had said so much, in spite of Cowperwaite's hurried aside, "Keep out of this, Ken. You'll hurt yourself. Stand from under," when Wright, the third man, who had not taken any active part thus far, spoke to Ward sharply:

"It's not so long ago, Mr. Ward, that we were debating whether to use our influence to have you removed. You're in no condition to stand sponsor for another. It will take little more to make us think that you two men are together and both in collusion with the Mayo gang."

Fillebrown took up the cudgels for Ward:

"This comes with a mighty bad grace, Wright, after the brilliant prosecution he has just made—"

But Wright overbore him:

"We would have got Mayo in that Brice matter if Holding had been handled right. I think we should have taken steps then toward having Ward removed. I never was in favor of letting things go. How do we know that he hasn't got hold of Remsen now by using the

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money of some man who has a motive for having Mayo convicted?" And he settled back with a defiant grunt.

Ward's face showed no sign of feeling beyond a sudden tenseness of all the muscles. But his unregenerate fists doubled. However, he was too desperately in earnest not to speak calmly.

"I haven't time just now to resent your statements, Mr. Wright. I suppose I must assume that, from your position in this matter, you have a certain right to make them. But I am concerned only in making you understand how completely impossible it is that Mr. Cowperthwaite can have done anything that was not straight."

"How does it happen, Ward, if your opinion of your associate is so high, that you two were at loggerheads during the earlier part of these prosecutions?" asked Fillebrown, shrewdly. "Your enmity was so clear that every one saw it. And it undoubtedly hurt our cause."

"That was a personal misunderstanding that has since been cleared up completely," said Ward, steadily. "I can only regret my past attitude. But I can assure you of my friend's honor—"

"It needs more than a statement from you, Ward," broke in Wright's caviling voice.

Ward turned on him in one of his sudden furies.

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"Well, damn it all, then, I'll *prove* it!" he said, desperately. "And I don't care a hang that I'll do for myself in proving it. Cowperthwaite's twice the man I am, and I don't propose to have him go down because of my fault."

"Go slow, Ken," said Cowperthwaite, anxiously. "You haven't anything to do with this matter of mine. Keep clear of it. It isn't going to hurt me. But for heaven's sake look out for yourself!"

But Ward's long period of rigorous self-control was at an end. A generous passion of belief in his friend had hold of him. Only half tamed as he was, or would ever be, it swept him out into a tide of magnificent emotion. He drew himself to his full height with the joy of deliverance from shackles. The frightful weariness that had oppressed him was routed, and with it the remaining shreds of prudence. He, flushed with the wine of combat, grew young and ardent and untired in the wonderful flaming up of every bit of vital force that was in him. Now, at last, there should be nothing hidden between himself and the world. He would show them what Will Cowperthwaite had been.

"Distrust Will Cowperthwaite!" His voice rang out triumphantly. "There isn't a man living whose record's whiter. He hasn't done

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a dishonest thing since I've known him. And I've known him almost all his life. Do you want to know why he couldn't take any part in the Brice case? It was because I checkmated him at every turn. I tell you—it was because I was on the point of selling myself to Mayo. Yes, I was ready to sell myself to Mayo!" He repeated the words defiantly. "And Cowperthwaite found it out, and came in a fury to denounce me with it. But when he found the reason that was making me act like an unclean beast he came back to me with his hand outstretched and believed in me, and helped me to go straight!"

He looked one moment at Cowperthwaite, with a glow on his face that made the heart of every man thump, because of the warm passion of affection that was in it, of belief and gratitude and every good and kindly thing. Then he turned to the other men again:

"And that's the man you're condemning because he doesn't wish to explain why he went to Mayo's house! I'd stake my life on his honor—I stake—st—"

A strange and puzzled look came over the ardent face. His tongue was thick. A dark flush rose to his forehead. He struggled painfully, gaspingly for utterance, tried to reach out

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his arms in sudden panic. One arm only could he move, the other hung powerless. Just as Cowperthwaite and Wright sprang toward him, he crumpled up. Had they been one instant slower they would not have caught him as he fell.

## CHAPTER XXIV

THE doctor summoned to the room in the Civic Club where Kenneth Ward had been carried was the one who had warned him. Ward had never had an occasion to require a physician's service for himself, so this chance acquaintance was the only one who suggested himself to Cowperthwaite. Dr. Hains, when he found that Mrs. Ward was away from home, wished to have the sick man taken to a hospital at once. But Cowperthwaite overruled him.

"I have often spent the night at his house when we were particularly pressed for time this summer," he said. "I can stay there now and will take full responsibility until we communicate with Mrs. Ward. You can have the best nurse you can find sent there at once to make ready for him." The doctor protested, but Cowperthwaite was firm. "I think it will be less of a shock for Mrs. Ward when she returns," he said, with quiet authority, "and more cheerful for Mr. Ward when he regains consciousness. Meantime I can manage things."



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Ward lay in stupor, motionless. The left side of his face was slightly drawn, his breathing labored. The doctor was grave.

"He's been under a severe nervous strain for months, of course," he commented. Then he turned to the four men who were hovering over the senseless figure. "Has there been any recent shock?" he asked of Cowperthwaite.

"Yes, there has," Cowperthwaite replied, gruffly, without raising his eyes to the others. "His heart was full of unendurable pain."

"Well, I can't diagnose yet with any certainty. This may be only a nervous collapse. But it looks to me perilously like a clot on the brain. If men would only learn not to ride a willing body to death! If it is a blood-clot, nobody can tell how it will terminate. It may be entirely absorbed; in which case he will soon be as well as ever. It may be partially absorbed; then he will be left with some slight paralysis of the side affected, with the probability of recurrence. The case may terminate fatally. It's utterly impossible to prophesy at this stage. We'll get an ice-pack on his head now. Get him home and in bed. I'll send a nurse with the ambulance."

In the interval of waiting before the ambulance came there was some low-toned discussion among

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the men who had so lately been sitting in judgment on the two friends. At the end of it Reynolds went to Cowperthwaite.

"Everything is at a standstill, you understand, until there is some outcome of Mr. Ward's illness. In the mean time, we suspend judgment. You'll have no critics here—only friends. You'll have the rest of the cases postponed, of course?" And when Cowperthwaite answered, indifferently, "I suppose so," the other man said, briefly, with a motion of his head toward where Ward lay, "You have a friend there!" and wrung his hand.

"Yes, and I propose to keep him; we've got to pull him through," Cowperthwaite said, brokenly. And his heart was lightened a trifle by the friendly concern of the other three. It was Wright to whom Cowperthwaite gave the hastily scribbled telegram to send to Ruth.

The twelve hours that followed were the most frantically anxious of Cowperthwaite's life. He refused to leave the room or even to lie down. With the nurse, and intermittently the doctor, he kept up the watch for some sign of returning consciousness in the stricken man. When nine o'clock came, and there was no change in the heavy breathing, the doctor admitted that the outlook was discouraging. An hour after that

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they all fancied the breathing was somewhat more normal. But the depth of stupor in which the man lay seemed just as profound. It was just after midnight that the heavy eyelids trembled, were finally pulled apart, and Ward looked up at the friend bending over him with something that looked like recognition in his eyes.

“Good!” Dr. Hains said, in a tone of intense satisfaction. Then he added in a voice that was suddenly aware how drowsy it was: “Now I think I’ll go home and get some sleep. Keep him very quiet; pull the shades down so the morning light won’t disturb him, and be very careful to keep every disturbance from him. If his wife telegraphs, don’t tell him unless he asks about her. Any shock now would be serious.”

Even then Cowperthwaite would not leave Ken’s bedside. He drew a big chair up so he could face the sick man, told the nurse to get some rest in the next room, and prepared to keep vigil. For the first time he had leisure to realize that they were in a room in Ward’s house that he had never been in before. It was one that the doctor had chosen for some advantage of situation—Cowperthwaite had forgotten what; or perhaps it was because the bed was a small one, and they could easily bend over the helpless man from either side. There was no light but

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a tiny glow from a sick-room lamp, and that was shaded by some paper contrivance the nurse had arranged. In the semi-darkness he could still see that everything was exquisitely light and fresh and simple, the walls of the palest tint and the curtains of the daintiest, lightest lawn. It adjoined Ruth's room. The guest-room that Cowperthwaite would occupy was on the floor above. He wondered idly how this chamber came to look so charmingly fresh and dainty, and yet, somehow, not have the impersonal air of non-use.

There was another trembling of Ward's eyelids. Cowperthwaite bent eagerly forward. The eyes were on him with what seemed like a faint question in their dark depths. Having been warned to do nothing to rouse him, Cowperthwaite merely smiled a peaceful assurance. Apparently it satisfied Ken, for he made an indistinct sound and closed his eyes again.

Again there was a long pause when existence seemed suspended. But Cowperthwaite was beginning to be so far reassured as to Ward's condition that his mind went off to Ruth, wondering why she had not telegraphed, hoping that Ken's illness might soften her. He had very little doubt that she would come on to nurse him; mere humanity demanded that, and

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Ruth was never lacking that way. But there was the graver question of her relation to Ken when he should recover—Cowperthwaite was already beginning to say “when” to himself instead of “if.” There was no telling what a dynamic young woman like Ruth would do—especially a young woman with red hair, he concluded, with a sigh that was the eternal masculine acknowledgment of his own helplessness before the feminine problem.

Of course the next step of his mind was toward Claire—if that sinking of his thought into a more active consideration of the love that lay, in a glow like firelight, always in the nest his heart had resolved itself into, could be termed a step. But he was not lost, as he usually was, in the alternating exultant upward leap of his confidence and its sagging before the inexorableness of the immediate situation. Instead of that, alone with Ken in the silent, white room, before the great issue of life or death, all the fever of his longing became merged into a strange calm. In the face of real separation, the barrier that divided them seemed a slight and transient thing. In that moment he thought he knew that the barrier was incapable of standing long against the great, silently sweeping, immeasurably deep flood of their attraction. At its height, his spir-



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itual exaltation carried him to a calm eminence from which he was persuaded that, after all, whether life gave her to him or not, the one essential was to know she *was*, sweet and high and fine, making all things more blest about her with her warm, tranquil, believing peace. But the very picture that his mind had made came to life in some strange manner and called to him on his still heights. And he came down from them, the tide of life again tingling all through him, exulting in his descent to that plane on which, even before Ken's silent face, he could think of her as his, swear that, in some way, she should be his after the sweet human claims through which he dimly felt must come all the hard-won gains of their spirits. And so, the cycle completed, he came to rest again in the mere assurance that, somewhere, his joy lay waiting for him. And Claire again slept, warm and peaceful, in the nest that had been made of his heart.

He was roused by seeing Ken's eyes fixed on him; he had not seen when they were opened. Ward was not only looking at him with full intelligence; he was making a strong effort to speak.

"Everything is all right. You are just to rest." Cowperthwaite spoke soothingly; he was not to encourage him to talk. But evidently that did not satisfy Ward, for he struggled again with the



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thick tongue that clogged his utterance. His friend bent toward him. His own heart taught him what name it was Ward wanted to say.

“She will come in a little while.” Cowperthwaite nodded reassuringly, beginning to feel, meantime, the suspense of the fact that Ruth had not yet answered. Suppose she should be obdurate—but no, that was unthinkable! Suppose she should be delayed in coming and that delay should make Ken worse! He waited, with tense anxiety, for the graying of the window-shades that would mean the dawn.

He heard the nurse stirring in the next room. Soon she came to Ward's bedside, scrutinized the patient closely, heard Cowperthwaite's report, insisted, with some show of sweetness toward this evident eligible, that he should get some sleep. Then followed the instant oblivion after he threw himself down on the couch in Ken's study, where he slept a most recreating two hours. Next was the doctor's persistently non-committal visit. After that Cowperthwaite realized that he must go to the City Hall and make arrangements for the postponement of the next case on the docket. He delayed longer than he should have done, hoping that some word would come from Ruth. But none came, and he had to go away with his heart still heavy with anxiety.

## CHAPTER XXV

AS soon as he got down-town he was beset with men who had heard, from the morning papers or from hearsay, about Ward's illness and were eager to know the details. He told the little that he could so many times that the words became stereotyped into a form. The worst of it was that in almost every case there was some inquiry as to Mrs. Ward's anxiety, and when he was obliged to say that she was away from home, demands as to when she would arrive, which he found embarrassing to answer. As soon as his business was despatched he hurried to go back to Ken. He couldn't reach the house by 'phone, for that had been switched off by the doctor's orders.

Half-way down the block he met Mayo. Cowperthwaite was hurrying past when the Big Man stopped him.

"What's this about your friend Ward?" Mayo asked, an emphasis on "friend" and an indescribable tinge of friendliness in his face.

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"I hope he's gaining." Cowperthwaite was hurrying on.

"Wait a bit. Or—I'll walk your way if you're pressed for time." Mayo turned and the two men walked a few paces in silence.

"Ward got into trouble defending you, didn't he? They say this attack followed a rather heated discussion."

Cowperthwaite halted.

"How did you know that?" he demanded.

"Oh, as I think I told you, it's my business to know things." Mayo's slow smile hardly disturbed the gravity of his face. "However, there's nothing mysterious about this. The circumstances point—you two men alone with the committee, the agitation of everybody. Moreover, it's possible that they were too much moved by it all to be quite prudent in what they said at first."

Mayo stopped speaking. His face was very grave as he turned it away. He was gazing into the crowded street, as if he were seeking there help for some hard task that was oppressing him. What things he saw there his strong face did not reveal, whether it was those things that were or those more real scenes that had passed. Did he see visions of his youth, his single loves, a young mother and sweet baby, an ivied mound,

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the clear trust in his daughter's eyes? No one could have told whether he saw the coming of better things or foreknew that his rôle was cast in tragedy. When he turned again to Cowperthwaite his face was merely serious.

"When do you want to marry my little girl?" he asked.

The younger man stared at him with perfect incredulity; then with indignation:

"It's not exactly the time for humor," he said, curtly.

"And my daughter is not the subject I would choose for humor."

"But—but she wouldn't marry me without your consent."

"She wouldn't have to. I've changed my mind."

It seemed to take a long time for Cowperthwaite to understand. When at last he did so, he was surprised himself that it was not a frantic exultation that took possession of him, but a strong, deep assurance that flowed in, little by little, until every cranny of him was filled. But it was not joy. Instead, it was an overwhelming seriousness before which he felt abashed. He couldn't even speak to Mayo as he should. He walked by him silently, trying vainly to grasp it all, to reconstruct himself, to imagine life with

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that barrier, that had been the prohibition of all joy, removed. Finally he gave it up, and turned again to Mayo with what he felt was a dumb and stupid coldness. But Mayo seemed to understand him and half smiled.

“What had made you change? I’m the same, and so is Ward, and all the conditions.”

“Not quite true of the conditions, is it? How about this last scene—when Ward risked his own job for you?”

“Well, that was Ken Ward that was great, not myself. And—”

“Oh, Cowperthwaite,” said Mayo, in soothing pity of his denseness, “do you suppose for a minute that Ward, even if he were a holy saint and martyr, would put his own career in peril for a man who had betrayed him with his wife? That’s the light that has broken in upon me. It’s the only absolute proof possible. You ought to be thankful that it came in time. And I want to ask your pardon.” His eyes sought Cowperthwaite’s, and his hand was outstretched.

Cowperthwaite took it, but with his head averted.

“You’d better ask *hers*,” was his gruff comment.

“So I would—if I had happened to converse with the lady. As it is, I suppose I did, a little, in my own mind.”

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The first coolness of the fall was in the air. The men walked briskly and in silence. They came, at last, to the street on which was Mayo's house. In the crisp air, with the bright sun flooding it, the quarter had an untidy gaiety of its own.

"I wish you'd tell me," Cowperthwaite spoke suddenly. "What's your reason, after all? Only one of the arguments against me has been removed. I'm still one of the men who convicted you; you've every right to think me your enemy. Surely it can't be very pleasant to you to give her up to me."

All at once Mayo flushed, surprisingly, boyishly. He hesitated a moment and then he met the younger man's eyes with his direct, forceful gaze.

"I don't want you to think I've got cold feet on my own account," he said, reluctantly. "I'm not a bit frightened. I'll have my appeal, and I'll never be imprisoned. I suppose I will have to use what you would call crooked methods to win out. Just now I'd a little bit rather not. Sometimes I think I would almost rather let the thing go and take my medicine. But I won't do it, all the same. I tell you, I am too good material to shut up in a cell and set to picking hemp. That doesn't correspond with my idea of the



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economy of things. So I will have to win out. But I have had my lesson. I have been wrong, dead wrong. Our kind of thing may accomplish some results, but it doesn't breed the right kind of man—"

"With all due respect to my own principles and damning you heartily for pretty much all you've done, I believe you are a bad example of your last point!" Cowperthwaite laughed.

But Mayo took him up with the utmost seriousness.

"No, I've thought that all out. That's because I had my start in the most rigorously disciplined household that was founded on the strictest and sternest principles, moral and religious. I acquired some habits then that stuck, that's all. But—I've come to the realization of it—Lyman is a cur of the type we breed. His turning traitor opened my eyes. And I reasoned it all out, from start to finish. All the playgrounds and mothers' outings and poor relief in the universe can't make up for it. When I got back to the beginning of things I found that, in fundamentals, I had been—dead wrong."

The sense of defeat in his tone came dangerously near being tragic. Cowperthwaite swallowed his sympathy, knowing that the worst crime would be to express it. Before the tight-

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ness at his throat had loosened he was surprised at the every-day cheerfulness of Mayo's tone.

"So as soon as I've got this thing straightened out I will have to set to work to do things the other way. I can show you fellows a trick or two when I get started." He laughed his hearty, confident laugh. "But still, this had made me feel the uncertainty of things a little. I want my little girl safe and sheltered. I want her with an honest man. You're it!" He laughed at his own attempt to turn his real feeling into slangy colloquialism.

Cowperthwaite looked up and saw that they stood outside Mayo's house.

"May I come in?" he asked, and the Big Man nodded.

Both men were silent and oppressed with feeling when they climbed the steps. Before Mayo put his key in the latch he said, hurriedly:

"There's another reason, but I won't tell you yet."

He ushered the young man into his study. They heard music coming from the next room. It rolled under the closed door and through the curtains, something prohibitive in its very beauty, sign and symbol of the girl whose fingers roused it from sleeping wood. Both men were stayed.

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"Wait!" whispered Mayo. And almost in the same instant the younger man held up his hand in warning and cried, "Hush!"

And then, at the thought of her, remote, withdrawn, maker of melody before which his own life seemed all crude, harsh noises, a sudden dismay overtook Cowperthwaite; it seemed as yet so much more natural to be dismayed than to be glad.

"We have taken things very much for granted," he whispered again to Mayo. "How do we know how she will feel about it? We haven't asked Claire."

And Mayo, filled with a novel awe of his own daughter, returned in rueful admission:

"That's so; you can't tell anything about the way a girl will feel about things."

The music silenced them. Neither man knew from what composer it was that she was playing. That didn't matter. It spoke to them. Contained within herself as Claire was, the revelation of her was such that it seemed sacrilege to listen.

First delicate and simple melodies flowed from her fingers, gentle, playful, but wanting in some relating, deeper chord. Both men instinctively waited for its coming. But when it first sounded, uncertain, tentative, but arresting, there was a

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sense of something wistful in the melody it wrought, choked and hidden like tears. Again it came, more sure, more potent, gathering unto itself all the vagrant happy airs, sweeping them before it, marshaling them into unthinkable harmony, marching triumphant, swelling in a passion of ecstasy. So, for some moments, the majesty of the passion held them, only to be arrested by a warning chord that fell into the midst, crashing all the jubilant beauty into a discord that seemed to shriek with pain. Then the two contended together for many a stormy measure, restless and discordant as November winds. The joyous exotic strain was crowded into silence; little by little the conquering theme took to itself power and dignity, and a certain delicate beauty, high and cold as stars on a frosty night. The music ended, almost suddenly, with a single austere, grave, heart-broken chord.

Mayo turned to Cowperthwaite. The father was suffering, and, unconsciously, he seemed to be accusing the lover because of it.

“Do you know now what I meant?” whispered Mayo. “That’s the other reason. That.”

The curtains parted and Claire appeared before them.

There was a moment in which she stood still and looked at them. Her lips had suddenly be-

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come dry and unmanageable. So she didn't try to speak. But even the slight tinge of pink that crept over her face could not drown the almost disconcerting directness of her clear, questioning eyes.

In the pause before any one spoke, a pause which he, somehow, felt no personal responsibility to put an end to, Cowperthwaite tried dreamily to fix, once for all, upon his mental vision the intangible difference from any other woman that made the inescapable charm of her face. If he were an artist, how few strokes—could he catch them!—would he use to give the quality of her face. How few, how simply curving, were the lines that defined her eyes with their accenting brows, the mingled sensitiveness to emotion and composure of her mouth—and oh, its sweetness! How gentle the curving but how subtle were the gradations that stamped its beauty on you!

He started toward her. "Claire!" he cried out, as if in a dream. "Oh, how I love you!"

But Mayo had gone to her and had taken her hand in his firm grasp. There was no such thing as delay to Mayo.

"Claire," he said, the crispness of his utterance queerly struggling with his gentleness, "this man loves you; I believe he can make you happy. I am willing he should have you."

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

She caught her breath a little. But her eyes clung always to her father, who had always been the dispenser of all good to her. And, more than anything else, her eyes questioned.

"Do you care for him?" There was a struggle before the tone could come out, cheerfully affectionate.

She was evidently troubled at having to answer. But it never occurred to her to evade.

"Yes—at least I suppose that is what it is."

Mayo smiled as he looked down at her hand, still held in his. The smile was a strained one and made stiff creases at the side of his mouth.

"Then, I suppose, the tactful method is for me to signify my consent and go."

But her hand still clung to his and her eyes went from him to Cowperthwaite.

"But—I don't understand. He isn't your friend."

The father hastened to reassure her:

"We have no personal enmity toward each other. Men often differ in opinion who still like each other. Mr. Cowperthwaite hasn't approved of my business methods, but—"

"Are you friends with my father?" The clear glance still dwelt on Cowperthwaite.

"I have the most friendly feeling for your father, apart from our—our contention." For



## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

the first time Cowperthwaite moved toward her, in the eagerness of his desire to end her doubt.

She frowned a little in her puzzle.

“Do you believe that he was right, that he has been always—honest?”

The lover blushed and stammered:

“Why—why—in some ways—although we differ.”

His evasion made her impatient.

“There is only one way to believe in any one,” she said with decision, “and that is, to the very bottom. In what other way can men be friends? Do you believe my father was honest?”

Cowperthwaite could make no answer.

“There! You see!” She turned from him helplessly.

Both men protested.

“But—you mustn't take such an extreme view. You don't understand—”

Still she held her ground, with a firmness that was too heartbroken to be merely obdurate.

“Either you have been opposing him when you were not convinced he was wrong—and I can't believe that of you for a minute—or you believe now, as you always have, that he isn't honest. Now *I* believe in my father. So you see it can't be. Surely that's perfectly simple. It can't.”

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

Mayo was beginning to look at her in puzzled speculation. But to Cowperthwaite's rising exultation in the thought that the way was clear to win her this stand of hers was only a passing phase. Wonder at his own unbelievable happiness was wearing off.

"But, Claire, you can't put me off that way for a mere idea. All these doubts will resolve themselves. Your father and I understand each other." His tone was gay and confident. But Mayo's presence was beginning to be irksome. He felt he could much better plead his cause alone.

Claire spoke:

"I heard you say he was a man whom all good citizens should regard as their worst menace. You said it in court. You believed that?"

"Why, yes, but that referred to the principles he stood for. You mustn't confound—"

She looked to her father for refuge. She knew he understood.

"You can't both be right, and have been fighting each other. I believe my father is right, although I know, of course, that you think you are. My father has always done everything for me. And I don't believe you can separate ways of believing and disbelieving as you say. You believe in any one or you don't.

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

It wouldn't be right to marry you, no matter how much I cared for you. I know it wouldn't be right. You can't both be right. I have to be loyal to my father. I am sure that is the right way. We couldn't ever be happy, being divided this way—"

Cowperthwaite was growing white with the shock of her strong opposition. His first emotion was something like anger. His face showed it.

Claire looked at him in helpless pain. Then she threw herself into her father's arms, hiding her face on his shoulder:

"Oh, make him understand; talk to him!" she sobbed. "He'll never believe that I love him so it hurts!"

That she should have gone to her father, not to him, for comfort! All at once Cowperthwaite felt that he had been deceiving himself. She had never cared for him. He turned away and walked to the window, trying to understand, trying to hide his hurt, hoping obstinately, but confused with pain.

For some moments Mayo let Claire sob in silence, smoothing, from time to time, the sleek, tawny masses of her hair. His firm hand even shook a little. His little girl was suffering. He verily believed it was for the first time in her

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life. The great fact of her pain filled the horizon. He could think of nothing else. For a time he could not even see a way. For him it was the first time he ever remembered feeling entirely helpless.

But his blue eyes narrowed as he looked into vacancy, the thing gradually took shape before him, that thing that he must do to make her happy. He didn't call it in his own thought "sacrifice" or "self-abnegation" or any other name. He was not given to calling his acts by sounding epithets. It took shape in his thought merely as: The thing that had to be done. So he loosened her arms with deliberate tenderness. When he had put her far enough away so he could look strongly down into her eyes he said:

"You must not send this man away because of his opposition to me, my daughter. He has been right and I have been—wrong."

A horrified, protesting exclamation broke from Cowperthwaite. His eyes pleaded with Claire, against himself, for her father with all the force of a most generous instinct. But the girl, for that moment, disregarded him. Her eyes, wide with unbelieving terror, elung to her father's. Quietly, inexorably, he held himself to answer to her demand. He watched the instinctive,

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

filial, passionate protest die from her eyes. For the flicker of an eyelash the feeling that replaced it was shrinking. Then her color rose and the lids fell over her eyes, that he might not see it. In that action Mayo read, inexorably, what he had done.

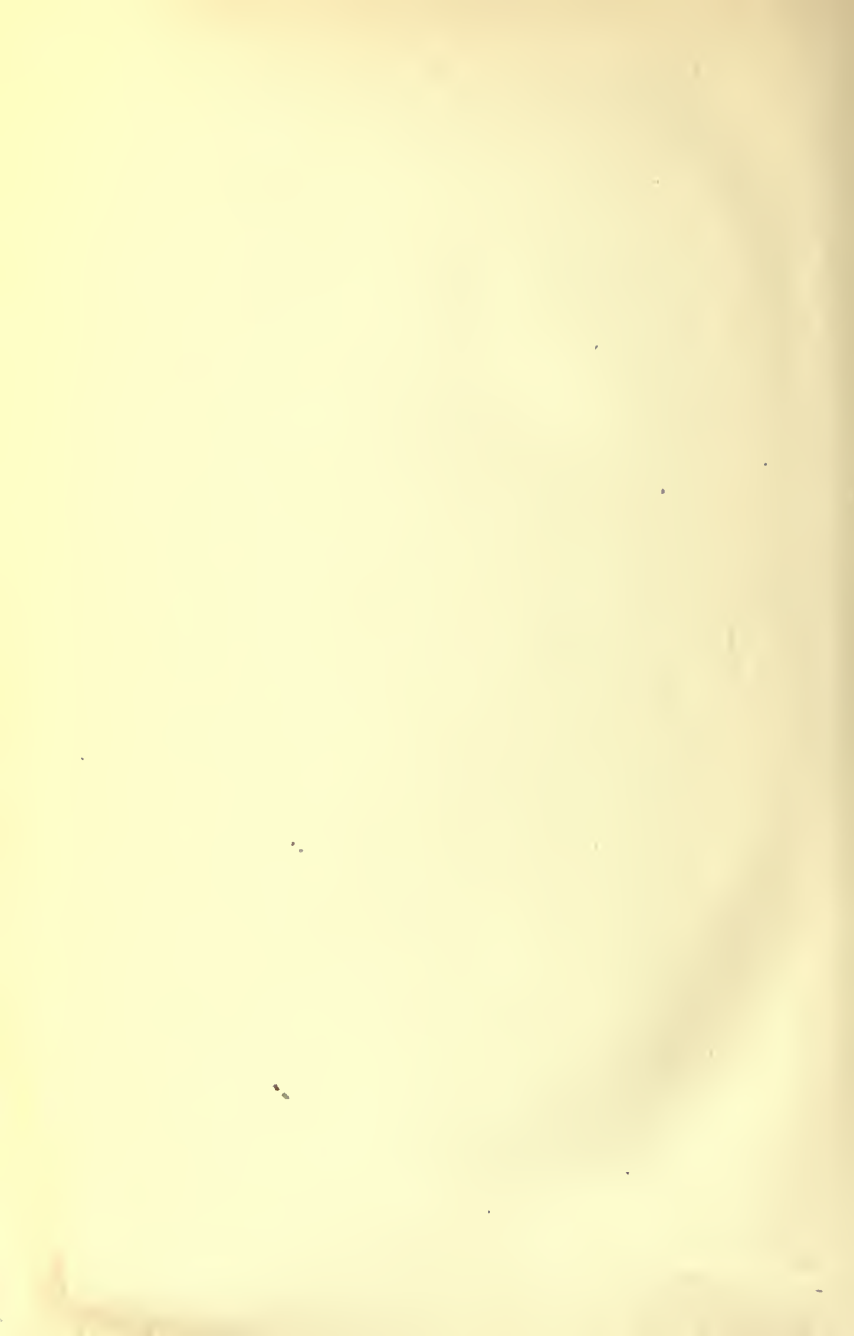
The next instant the impulse of recoil had passed. His little girl clung to him again, weeping, fluttering out her love, her pity, for that divine, womanly instinct in her awoke. The father held the tender hands most lovingly. He let himself take joy in her exquisite loyalty, that caressing tenderness that would never fail him. For all that, he had seen in her eyes what his life had been, unfailingly, as the verdict of the jury had not presented it. Whatever his crimes were, that moment registered his full weight of punishment. He knew that that most beautiful fellowship that for years had made the whole charm of his roughshod existence was over. He could not even take some sad credit to himself for having had the selflessness to end it. He never absorbed the shock of events by featuring himself before his own consciousness. To John Crayke Mayo things either were not or were.

Moreover, this first troubled but exquisite moment of her young fluttering flight toward



BOTH WERE REALIZING THAT THEY WERE ALONE





## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

mating must have no pain in it that could be avoided. So Mayo resumed his cheerful, confident manner. He shook Cowperthwaite's hand with a friendliness that had become almost fatherly. In passing Claire he swept her hair with a kiss where the silky folds were parted. He left the room with perfect naturalness.

After a moment Claire raised her eyes. Her lover's eyes were entreatingly on her as she had felt them. So there was no room for any other thought. For both were realizing that they were, miraculously, alone.

## CHAPTER XXVI

WHEN Cowperthwaite found, on his return to the house where Kenneth Ward lay, still motionless, that no word had been received from Mrs. Ward, he reproached himself for his own selfishness. During the hour he had spent with Claire he had absolutely forgotten Ken. And what thoughts had been passing through the mind of the helpless man during that time? He learned that Ward had appeared to be conscious. The nurse told Cowperthwaite that several times Mr. Ward had seemed to want to speak, but she had been unable to understand him.

Two steps at a time Cowperthwaite went up the stairs to Ken. The walls of the darkened room glimmered palely, the counterpane lay piteously undisturbed since the nurse's hands had smoothed and pulled it into its straight, methodical lines. The friend took his place by the side of the bed and waited.

It seemed to him an indefinitely long time that he sat there. Ken was asleep, the breath-

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

ing was quiet and regular, the dark flush had left his face. The doctor came, and after a brief survey said that his gain or loss would be more apparent when he awoke. Then the doctor asked rather anxiously whether anything had been heard from Mrs. Ward. The two men made a computation of the necessary time for an answer to the telegram, and debated, in hushed tones, the advisability of sending another one, more urgent.

There was a slight sound, and they saw that Ward's eyes were open. The rubber ice-bag, which happened to be decorated with a brilliant Scotch plaid pattern, was perched on one side of his head, giving the white face a sort of hysterically jaunty look. But all the expression they could desire had come into the black eyes that burned under it. They were incarnate longing. Beseeching eyes on Cowperthwaite, he made terrible efforts to speak. The sounds were painfully incoherent. The eyes were desperate at the realization of his impotence.

"Yes, yes," said the doctor; "we understand." It was necessary to reassure him at all hazards. But Ward seemed to disregard him, his eyes still clinging to Cowperthwaite. He tried to speak again; this time his friend thought he could distinguish the wife's name:

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

“Ruth?” tried Cowperthwaite. Then, when the passionate assent in the eyes only gave way to a more passionate inquiry, Cowperthwaite added, “We have heard from her; she is coming,” hoping, as he said the words, his lie had not been the more hurtful course.

The slight flush that had come with the effort died out, and Ward lapsed, looking more exhausted than before, with the dying away of his frantic energy. The doctor went into the next room, beckoned to a hurried colloquy by the nurse. That lady had already begun to suggest that she would need a night-nurse on the case, since it promised to be a long and difficult one. Cowperthwaite, overhearing, thought indignantly of Ken Ward, with all his generous warm-heartedness, being dependent, at this moment, on perfunctory attendance and his own inadequate aid.

Coming back, the doctor warned Cowperthwaite against talking more than was necessary, or allowing the sick man to dwell on anything disquieting. “I think we would better telegraph to the wife again,” he said, in an undertone. “He needs all the assistance he can have. Unless he shows more improvement in the next twenty-four hours than he has in this I am afraid we cannot hope for a complete disappear-

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

ance of the paralysis. I doubt if the end will be fatal; but I am afraid we cannot look for the best." Then Cowperthwaite was left alone again. The nurse told him, smiling sweetly, that there was no necessity for him to remain; she would put off her walk half an hour if necessary. But he chose to stay.

It was about ten minutes after the doctor had gone that Cowperthwaite, turning involuntarily toward the door, saw Ruth standing there. She still wore her hat, and she threw a long wrap over a chair on entering. She walked like a somnambulist, her eyes on the man lying in the bed.

When she stood beside him she paused and stood, looking down at him. It was true, then! All the length of the journey she had been telling herself, monotonously, every other minute, that it could not be. How could any one believe that Ken could be stricken?

That long, inert helplessness meant that it was true. As she looked, one hand moved, weakly, waveringly, toward his face. Half-way, either through impotence or because some half-formed purpose wavered, it paused, was feebly still. At the sight something was born in Ruth's heart that had been lacking, something that grew, expanding in a great passionate surge of all her be-



## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

ing, until she unconsciously put her hand to her breast, feeling that she must have grown in stature. It gripped at her throat, choking her; it tingled in her eyes until all things in the quiet room seemed charged with soft radiance, as the pencil of afternoon light beneath the window-shade shot into a rainbow of iridescence, seen through the blinding tears in her half-shut eyes. She made an indescribable sound and bent over him. She was like a mother whose naughty child has been brought home hurt.

The foolish gaiety of the ice-bag troubled her. She took it away and hung over him, trying to read all the history of the weeks that had divided them in the face of the wreck that lay there, his eyes still closed, his pallor death-like, the white lock showing wan in the damp, black mat of his hair. The bleached lock was scarcely more colorless than the skin that was stretched taut over the sharp hollows of his forehead, but beside the gray-white of the skin the mere colorlessness of that strange, white wing of hair seemed a wholesome thing. Appalled by what she saw she sank suddenly to her knees and touched humbly the big, helpless hand that lay sprawled out on the mathematically straight coverlid, and held it in her own two trembling hands and loved it very carefully with her lips.

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

A slight stirring of the outstretched hand and arm put her in a panic. She got to her feet, and then, for the first time, she looked wonderingly around the room. Her hands went to her dazed forehead when she saw Cowperthwaite. She had not realized before that any one was there. She went to him with her breathless questions.

Cowperthwaite satisfied her anxiety as well as he could, and saw that some of the color had come back to her lips. He told her, in a few words, the exact conditions, the best that could be hoped for and the worst. He spoke with absolute truthfulness, not making light of the manifest danger. When he told of the beginning of Ken's illness, the scene at the Civic Club, she interrupted him:

"Then you and he are friends again—he understands?"

"Yes. I really wasn't as base as you thought me," Cowperthwaite replied, finding a singular unreality in all this old issue. "I had tried to explain matters, but he tore up the letter."

"I remember your saying something about that," she said. Then, hurriedly, "But go on."

When he charged himself with being the cause of Ken's illness she shook her head impatiently.

"I am the one to blame. It's all my fault—mine!" She seemed to feel some queer jealousy

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

that any one else should have been of so much weight in Ken's life as to effect his hurt!

Then there were a few questions and answers while they discussed the details of her journey and of the sick-room. "Why didn't you telegraph you were coming?" Cowperthwaite asked, finally. "I did, from the first way station that flagged the train," she said, in surprise. "I had barely time to catch the train. Has he been in suspense all this time? Or didn't he ask for me?" Her face was all tense question.

"I told him you were coming, the last time he woke," Cowperthwaite hastened to reassure her.

Her face relaxed into soft gratitude. "Oh, thank you; I'm so glad."

When they were silent for a moment, and stood together looking down at Ken's helplessness, a mist came into Cowperthwaite's eyes. Ruth saw the suspicious softness. At that moment she forgave him freely, and took his hand, comforting him, forgetting her own terror, forcing herself into a steadfast determination that all must be well. She felt the birth of some new sympathy in Will Cowperthwaite. From that time they were the friends they had been, in the days of their youth, before anything had come to spoil their honest liking for each other. In that moment's prelude, while Ken still slept,

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

their score was wiped clean, and with a good hearty warmth of feeling they knew there would be friendship between them to the end.

Then Cowperthwaite charged himself with some of her commissions and left. The new happiness that was always throbbing underneath, in some amazement at its daring to be happiness in the midst of this other suffering, warned him that Ruth must be alone, to meet Ken's first return to consciousness. Before he turned the corner he knew that, as soon as Ken was out of danger, he should, infallibly, tell Ruth about Claire.

The nurse bustled in, in street attire, to be met with Ruth's low-toned introduction of herself and assurance that she would take charge while that young lady went for her afternoon outing. It took some minutes to hear a report on Mr. Ward's condition that differed from Cowperthwaite's only in the use of more technical terms. Then the nurse gave instructions and indicated the medicines to be used when he awoke, reiterated the doctor's command that the patient be kept quiet, as free as possible from any disturbance, looked professionally non-committal at the moment she was asked to give her opinion, and then hastened ostentatiously to give the usual perfunctory assurance. Then again Ruth was left alone.

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

Her eyes on Ken, to make sure she did not miss a motion, she took off her hat and mechanically loosened the hair around her temples; it was pressed down by the weight of her hat during the long hours of her journey. In the dimness of the room her hair seemed to partake of her own fatigue; it was lifeless and dull brown. A few hasty steps aside into her own room to leave her hat and cloak there (so there might be no signs of confusion or disorder when Ken opened his eyes—that all might seem normal), and she was ready for her vigil. A throb of exultation pushed its way into the midst of her anxiety. There was no one to meddle; he was all hers to care for.

Seated by the bed, her eyes strayed about. Dark as it was, she knew all the outlines of that room by heart. Some vague, intangible sense of an overtaking fate caught at her heart as she wondered why, with all the others to choose from, they should have brought him to that room. The delicate wall-paper, the few simply framed bright prints, the screen shutting off the corner of the room—everything was photographed on her heart. Although the darkness hid it, she could have reproduced on paper the tracery of the clean-looking designs in Delft blue on the white ground of the cotton fabric that covered

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

the screen. It was so much better to buy something that could be washed often, she had thriftily argued when she bought it. And it had proved to be so much prettier than the more pretentious stuffs that Ken had advocated. There was a catch in her breath as she turned from the screen to Ken's face. The bed he lay on was an after-thought, put in there later. A faint sound put all other thoughts to flight. Ken was stirring.



## CHAPTER XXVII

**B**Y the frantic beating of her heart she knew she was not ready. Why hadn't she prepared what she would say, how she would act? She wondered with futile anger at herself. Then she pressed both hands hard against the place where her heart thumped tumultuously; she wondered whether it wasn't bruising the walls it beat against, it thumped so hard. As if they were dragged apart by a force greater than himself, Ken's heavy eyes opened.

For a moment he stared at her in the smiling, unsurprised blankness with which a baby opens its eyes to see, hanging over his crib, the mother's face that was his last waking vision the night before. Spellbound, she saw consciousness creep into them, and, with consciousness, the inevitable pain.

When wonder had put to rout the last remnant of his sluggish peace he struggled for utterance. His wife, her eyes on him, in painful encouragement, felt, in that moment, that fate could hold no greater suffering than to helplessly watch him

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

struggle with the bound muscles that forbade the agony of his desire to speak. The longing in his black eyes tore at her raw heartstrings. The left corner of his mouth drooped slightly; she saw that the left arm lay along the coverlid with a rigidity that was a world apart from peace. Again and again he tried to speak, while she frantically tried to telegraph power to him, or busied herself needlessly tucking in the counterpane to hide the helpless trembling of her lips.

“Ruth!” Surely he had said her name! He had at last achieved it! She flushed rosy-red with the great tide of her joy. From all that had been told, she knew that he had made a great step toward recovery. But she controlled herself and said, smiling with a calm that made all usual:

“Yes, Ken. Now close your eyes and sleep.”

But he would not be satisfied. Evidently consciousness had come to him in too strong a current for him to be willing to have his questions pushed aside. He was impelled to speak. The word he was struggling for seemed an impossible achievement. He tried and tried until she felt he would go mad with the strain. A dozen times she tried to soothe him into mere quiescence, which the doctor had said was what they all must strive for. She was heartsick before the

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

fear that the agitation of her coming might be harmful to him. She filled the ice-cap with shaved ice from the next room; she patted his cheek and petted him; she talked in cheerful disconnectedness about every sick-room detail that occurred to her—the light, more covering, the medicine she was giving him. But every time, as inexorably as fate, as soon as there was a pause in her monologue, she could see the poor lips struggling to form that insistent word. At last it came:

“Wh-when—”

She knew without asking the rest of the sentence.

“An hour ago. I started as soon as I got the message,” she said, in quiet tenderness. His eyelids drooped from weariness for some minutes. But when he opened them again it was evident he was not satisfied. He was trying to speak again. Would nothing she could do put an end to that piteous struggle? Still, even to her pain and terror, it was evident that the word came more easily:

“For—give!” For all his effort, it was in a hesitating, husky whisper.

“Oh, my dear love—” As she was speaking she saw a big tear gather in his eye and tremble there.

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

She threw herself on her knees beside the bed. Her instinct was to overwhelm him with her love, tell him she was the one to plead for pardon, sweep him away with the torrent of her aching, remorseful, passionate tenderness. But with the impulse came the knowledge that she must not do it. Whatever happened, her place was to calm and reassure him. So, with the hands that longed to draw the heavy head to her breast, she wiped carefully with a cool fresh handkerchief the tear. Had any living being ever seen a tear in Ken's eyes before?

"Of course I forgive you," she said, with the calmest maternalism she could manage. Then, with the ache in her throat almost choking her utterance, she added, to throw a reassuring lightness over it all, "If you say so, we'll just make up."

The bit of transparent playing served its part. Something that seemed like a smile trembled for a moment over his lips. But in the peace brought by the comfort that he craved his weariness again overpowered him. With the same wholesome habit that makes a sick baby sink into sleep that Mother Nature provides as her best medicine, almost instantaneously it seemed, he slept again.

Again Ruth was left to her solitary watching.

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

But this time hope made her breath flutter hysterically in her throat. To calm herself, she went over in her mind each moment since her arrival, rehearsed, to tell the doctor, the exact sound-value of each word he had said. Surely the second word had come more easily than the first, and the third one almost normally. And they had told her he had not been able to make a really intelligible sound before she came—no, it was *not* that she was better able to interpret. The last word had been as distinct as any one could say it. And the smile had been almost like Ken's own. As Ken sank into a deeper slumber she went to the window and pulled the shade out so she could peer from behind it. The sun was low; it must be late afternoon.

She heard the hall door open cautiously. Was that the nurse or the doctor? Soon a man's heavier tread told her it was not the nurse. The doctor came into the room.

While she was telling him, in tones whose hopeful excitement struggled through the constraint she put upon herself, all that had happened the nurse came in from her outing. Then, as the nurse was taking off her street things, Will Cowperthwaite came back. So, since Ward was plainly sleeping quietly, they all withdrew into the next room to talk over the case without dan-

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

ger of disturbing him. With each detail that she added the doctor nodded his head in satisfaction, and the tension of Cowperthwaite's firm lips relaxed, and in his eyes was a quiet smile.

Finally the doctor gave his opinion:

"It looks very hopeful to me," he said. "Undoubtedly the clot is being absorbed. At this stage nobody, of course, can be sure whether he will recover completely or not. I think the sagging of the muscles of the left side is lessened. But he hasn't moved that arm yet, has he? That will be the final test. If he moves his fingers I would say that, barring some additional trouble—and you can't be too careful to avoid excitement that might occasion a relapse—I would say he will probably recover completely. Now"—turning to the nurse—"I'll have to call up another hospital for a night-nurse. All those I have called for are busy."

"We don't need any one else." Ruth spoke quickly. "I'll relieve the nurse."

That lady began to look dubious.

"I'm afraid I can't hold out," she had begun, when Ruth said, with a touch of temper:

"I think you won't be burdened. What on earth do you think a wife is for? I'll take care of him to-night."

"But you must be tired from your journey."



## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

Cowperthwaite's tone was kindness itself. The doctor, too, was most solicitous.

"I rested all the way here," Ruth said, briefly, even while the recollection of the long agony of the railroad train rose in her mind. The doctor was persistent in his solicitude—he was not entirely impervious to her charm. But Ruth overruled them all, thinking, in her heart, that she would save Ken as much as possible from such half-hearted service.

With the nurse in charge again, the wife had time to slip out and arrange the household in preparation for a possible long siege of sickness. Cowperthwaite was sent out on errands, the maids received instructions, there was a bewildering amount of ordering over the 'phone, every one did his part. Even the nurse moved with less deliberation. A new, strong, vigorous force had come into the stricken house, and every one, even if he were inconvenienced by it, felt, in his heart, it was well. Since hope was allowed her, in Ruth's sanguine mind it became certainty. When she was where it would not disturb Ken, she hummed as she made her arrangements. Trunks and closets were ransacked, fresh white frocks were dragged out. Ruth put herself into as near an approach to a nurse's uniform as possible, thinking, as she arranged the rich, red coils

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

of her hair before the mirror, that Ken would surely find her pleasanter to look upon than that "machine" down-stairs.

After this revivifying period, Ken woke and the nurse gave him a few spoonfuls of broth, which he swallowed, although with great difficulty. He was made ready for the night and the nurse went to bed in the adjoining room. Cowperthwaite had decided, so as to be ready in case she needed help, to throw himself, ready-dressed, on a couch in the study down-stairs. When the maids had locked things up and all was quiet, not even Cowperthwaite making a sound, she made herself as comfortable as she could in the big chair that had been brought up for her from the study, to watch by Ken through the long hours of the night.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

THE tiny, softly shaded glow of the night-lamp came from a little table, placed in a far corner of the room where even the glow could not reach Ken's eyes and hurt them. Wrapping a rug about her, she put her head on the cushiony back of the chair and closed her eyes with a restful sigh. There was no sound but the regular breathing of the sleeping man. Her mind was freed from the fear that had been crushing her. A great peace fell on her.

In her quiescence the present vanished. She was lost in the memories the room invoked. All the hopes were as real as though the past had not long ago engulfed them, the vague sentiment, the fluctuating emotion, the sharp intrusions of forbidding fear. When she opened her eyes narrowly, each detail, seen through the soft haze of the tiny light, meant a never-forgotten moment, some eager discussion, some melting tenderness, some secret shopping excursion when a new self-consciousness struggled vainly with a soft and tremulous pride. She recalled that when she

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

chose the paper on the walls Ken had gone with her. And two of the simple pictures he had brought home. She remembered just where she had stood under the side-light across the room when he had brought the first one to her. It was one that had been in his own room in boyhood, a silly little picture with much bright primary color of a furbelowed little girl and a curly dog. He had been transported when he saw it in some second-hand shop and had come home in touching exultation to show it to her.

They all came thronging to her, these recollections that for so long she hoped she had forgotten. Now something rose in her, an impelling, insistent passion that seemed beating madly against bonds in its struggle to be freed. With an impatient gesture of her arms she yielded and went blindly to it—the screen that hid that corner of the room.

She drew the screen away. There everything was, undisturbed. She had never allowed anything to be put up in the attic or given away, though she had been often tempted. Now the fate of the moment was on her and she suffered as she looked.

There is nothing on earth so incredibly touching as the soft nest that has been builded for a little baby; a swinging nest this was, of delicate

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

white wicker, all lined with rosiness, lace-shaded and heaped with fleece. The pink ribbons of the little hamper were so little faded that, in the soft light, they looked as fresh as the day she had tied them crisply. She knew each dainty stitch of the tiny things that filled it. Yes, the fate of the moment was on her. She leaned against the wall, with her eyes hidden in her trembling hands while the salt waves broke over her.

A sound coming from the bed startled her as if she had been doing something guilty. She brushed the tears from her eyes and drew the screen back to its place.

“Ruth!” This time he was calling clearly. In a moment she was beside him. “Water, please,” he said, quite naturally, and smiled as she bent over him to smooth the white lock out of his eyes.

Her heart brimming like the glass she filled for him, she brought the water. It was infinitely sweet to tend him; after all, this was the first real thing she had been able to do for him since she had come. And, before, Ken's boundless strength had never been very tolerant of coddling. He tried to raise his head, but that was too hard for him. It fell back on the pillow. With an ache in her throat, she raised his head with one hand,

## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

cooing to him some soft, incoherent, mother-sounds as she anxiously raised the cup so he could drink.

He tried patiently. It was hard for him to swallow. At first he spilled it. His eyes tried to tell her how parched he was.

“Try it this way, dear.” Her face was wet with tears as she raised his head still higher. This time he could drink; with each difficult swallowing strength seemed flowing in to him. When it was over he sighed with content and lay quiet again.

She held his head on her arm while she turned and plumped up the pillow. Her arms took on the inimitable curve of motherdom; she whispered soft, silly things to him as she worked. And in his weakness, with all of life's currents beginning painfully to resume their wonted channels, the eternal earth-croon in her voice strengthened him as the passionate adoration that lay pulsating just back of it could not have done.

She resumed her seat, but something was making him restless. He kept moving his heavy head from side to side and glancing at her, as if oppressed by some wish he had not strength to utter. At last his well hand went up, with an undefined, groping motion to the pillow beside him. With the hot tears springing to her eyes, it was given to her to understand.



## AS CAESAR'S WIFE

She put her head down on the pillow beside him, her rounded cheek against his where the lines had been graven so deep. He gave a sigh of utter satisfaction, and his well hand drew her face closer to his a moment, then it fell away. Her heart filled to overflowing and she reached her arm across the long, lax helplessness of him to the other poor hand, that lay wide open on the coverlid, as if it asked for something—it too.

Her hand caressed his—nestled there. There was the feeling of benignant forces all about them. Something happened—her breath suspended, she watched the miracle. With the contact of the warm life current that flowed through her vigorous, gentle hand, the big loose fingers that she touched curled, instinctively, inevitably, shutting weakly over hers!

She shut her lips together to keep the sound back. Hysterical words were rising in her throat—sobs, laughter, prayers.

They beat so against the barrier. “The best the doctor hoped for! He has moved them! The dear fingers! God has heard me! I am forgiven! He will be well!”

Whether he himself understood what had happened, the import of that uncertain grasping, she couldn't tell then. But his eyes met hers as she moved to look more closely. And in the child-

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like dependence that weakness brings, the deep eyes clung to hers, asking, humbly, if he had not done well.

Thus they stayed for long peaceful, magical moments, while the thankfulness that filled her heart seemed to deafen her ears with triumphant organ-peals. Over and over again they came: "He has moved! He will be well!" Yet it seemed to be the very next instant that that blessed assurance had become the accustomed and normal thing.

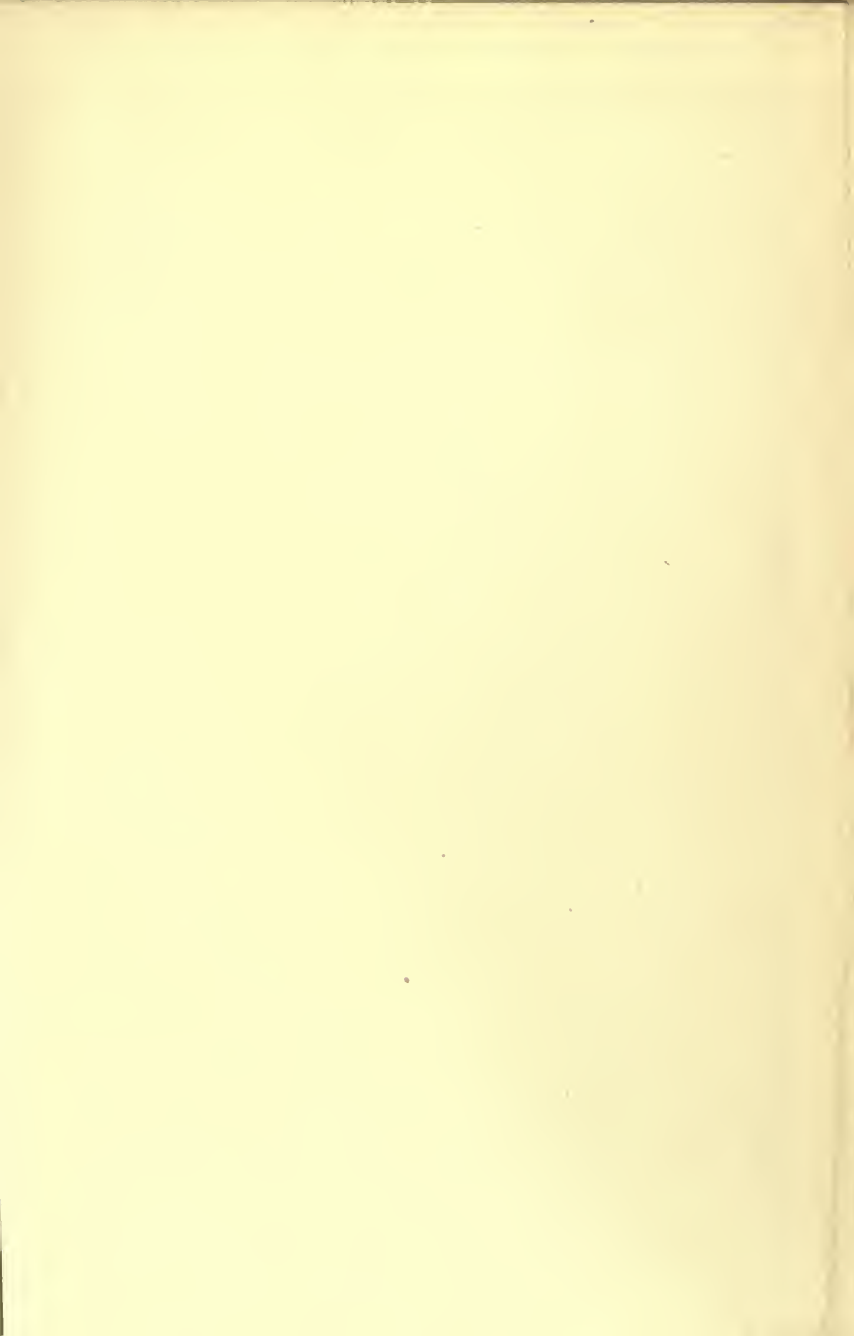
Again the sick man dropped to sleep. In the absolute quiet, her thoughts gradually drifted off into happy reveries; the day of their first meeting; the disquieting emotions of their marriage; those days when she had gathered together all that lay behind that screen. Her eyes followed her thoughts. Her thoughts went back to Ken again—to the tumultuous days of his wooing.

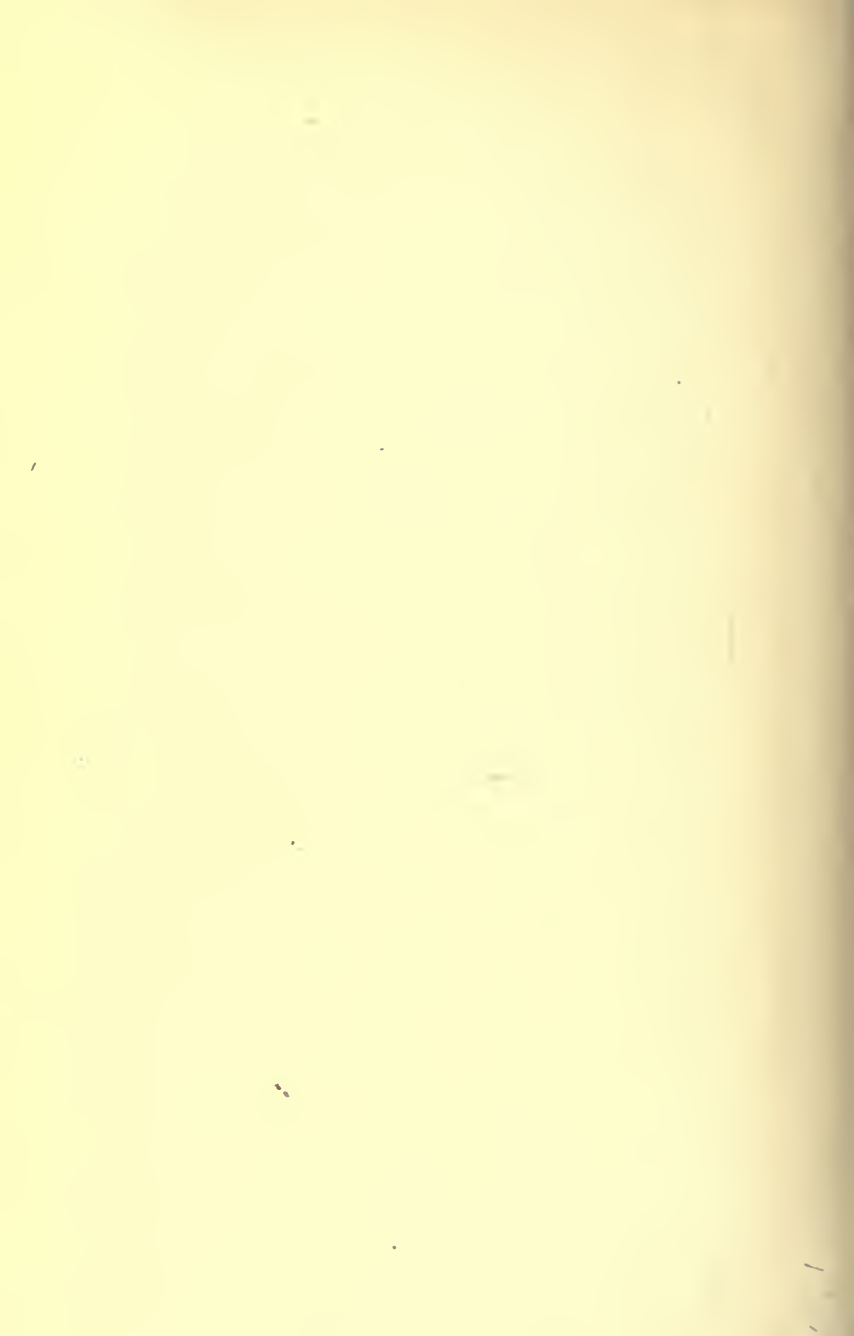
"You always swept me before you, hushed and breathless," she thought. The sick man stirred, moved uncomfortably. "It's that end of the pillow-case that's bothering him," she thought, folding it under with one of her vigorous motions. Her eyes drifted again to the screened corner. And so, in the quiet, since there was no one to be pained by it but herself who knew the pain

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was blessed, she opened up that corner of her heart where the wound was that had never healed. "They never let me hold my little baby. How could I know it would be so heavenly sweet just to pet and love you and forgive?"

THE END





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