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THE RECKONING

BY
B. L. C. GRIFFITH



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THE RECKONING

A Drama in Four Acts

BY

B. L. C. GRIFFITH

Author of "BETWEEN THE ACTS," "PRO
TEM," etc.



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Unsat,

The Reckoning

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Ages

- 50. NICHOLAS HOPPER . *A wealthy carpet manufacturer*
- 55. JOSEPH SKINNER *His business agent*
- 30. JOHN ARMSTEAD *A lawyer*
- 21. HENRY STRATTON *Hopper's nephew*
- 60. DR. WM. McLAIN . *The physician at Hopperton*
- 45. ROBERT ANDREWS *A poor man living in Hopperton*
- JERRY *Hopper's man servant*
- BARNEY *Armstead's man servant*
- 45. MISS SARAH HOPPER . *Sister of Nicholas Hopper*
- 20. MARGARET HOPPER *Her daughter*
- 50. MRS. HENDERSON . . . *A poor woman living in
Hopperton*
- 28. MRS. KING *Her daughter*

NOTE.—JERRY and BARNEY may be doubled, and so may STRATTON and SKINNER, if desired.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION :—Three hours.

A month is supposed to intervene between Acts I and II ; two weeks between Acts II and III ; and eighteen hours between Acts III and IV.

COSTUMES

- HOPPER. Summer costume of well-dressed business man ; same suit throughout, if desired.
- SKINNER. Well dressed. Business summer suit, a little loud in style, bright colored tie, etc. May double with STRATTON.
- ARMSTEAD. Well dressed. Business suit, quiet in color and style. May wear same summer suit throughout. Hat and cane in Acts I, II and IV.
- STRATTON. Same as ARMSTEAD. May double with SKINNER. Straw hat in Act III.
- DR. MCLAIN. Dignified dress of professional man ; high hat, glasses. Gray hair, and gray moustache or beard if desired.
- ANDREWS. Shabbily dressed, but dressed a little better in later acts than in Act I.
- JERRY. Servant's costume or livery. May double BARNEY by slight change in costume and make-up of face. JERRY a well-trained Irish servant.
- BARNEY. Servant's costume. May double JERRY. BARNEY is a green Irishman.
- MISS SARAH HOPPER. Quiet gray dress. Gray hair, glasses, etc.
- MARGARET and MRS. KING. Handsome summer dresses, hats, parasols, etc. MARGARET dresses more simply than MRS. KING.
- MRS. HENDERSON. Neatly, but very plainly dressed. Gray hair.

PROPERTIES

- ACT I.—For HOPPER, packet of letters, sealed note, letter-opener, call-bell, pen, ink, paper, envelope, papers to represent documents, photographs. For JERRY, card-plate and card.
- ACT II.—For MISS SARAH, basket and fruit. For MRS. HENDERSON, letter, and pillow or cushion. For DOCTOR, watch. For HOPPER, folded paper.

PROPERTIES

ACT III.—For ARMSTEAD, watch, sealed letter, telegraph blank, check-book. For ANDREWS, large envelope, pen, ink, paper. For SKINNER, telegram. For STRATTON, pen, ink, paper.

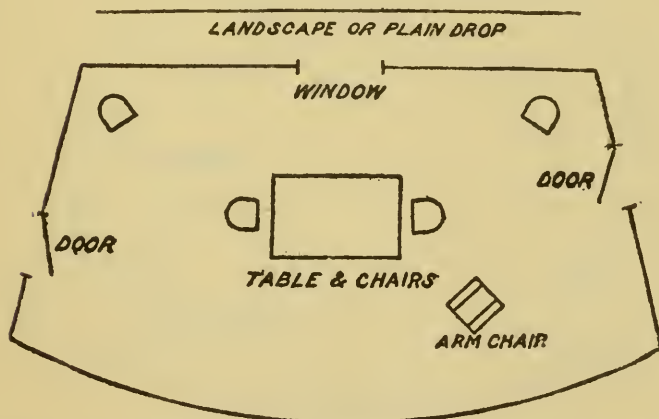
ACT IV.—For JERRY, feather-duster, waste paper basket, and telegram. For HOPPER, watch, telegraph blanks, revolver, box of cartridges, check-book. For ARMSTEAD, folded paper.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

The player is supposed to face the audience. R. means player's right; L., his left; C., centre; R. C., right of centre; L. C., left of centre.

SCENE PLOTS

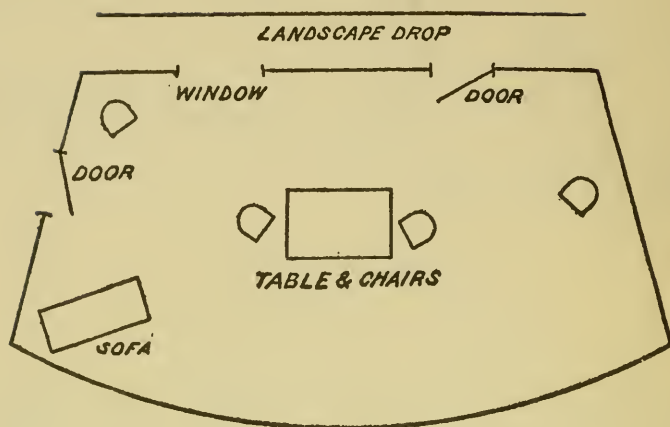
Act I



Room in MR. HOPPER's residence, New York City. Doors R. and L. Window in centre of flat. Landscape or plain drop. Table and chairs C. Arm-chair near table, L. Other chairs and handsome library furnishings as desired.

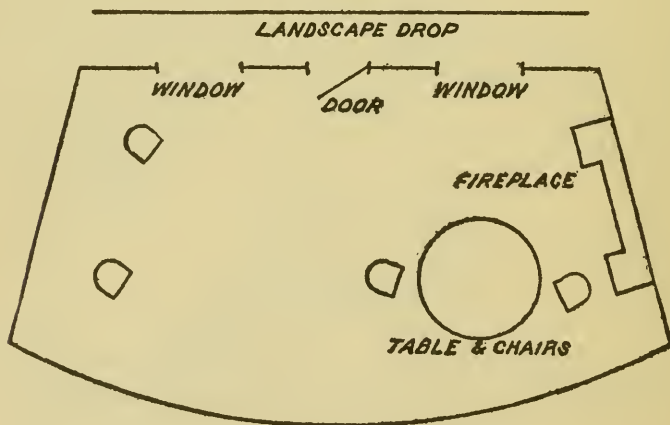
SCENE PLOTS

Act II



MRS. HENDERSON'S residence, Hopperton. Door R., window in flat R., door in flat L. Landscape drop. Table and chairs C. Sofa down R. Plainly furnished room.

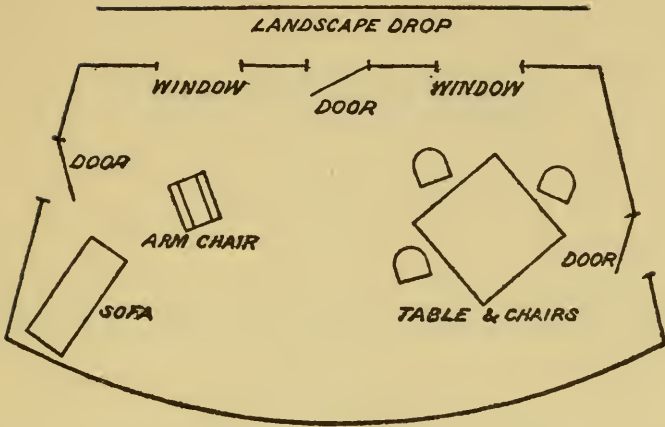
Act III



Room in ARMSTEAD'S residence, New York. Door C. (in flat). Windows R. and L. (in flat). Landscape drop. Fireplace and table and chairs L. Other furnishings of a handsome character, as desired.

SCENE PLOTS

ACT IV



Room in MR. HOPPER'S residence, Hopperton. Doors R. and L. and C. (in flat). Windows R. and L. (in flat). Table and chairs L. C. Armchair R. C. Sofa down R. Other furnishings of a handsome character, as desired.

The Reckoning

ACT I

SCENE.—*The library in NICHOLAS HOPPER'S New York residence.*

(*Enter HOPPER, R.*)

HOPPER. Yes, I must raise money somehow, even if I am compelled to borrow. I am beginning to think that I was very foolish ever to have attempted to corner the cotton market; and yet if I can corner it, I shall make a fortune. (HENRY STRATTON *appears L. Graciously.*) Walk in, Henry; walk in and take a seat.

(*Enter HENRY, L.*)

HENRY. I do not wish to take your time, sir, but —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Don't mention it, my boy. If I can be of any service to you, I think I can manage to spare a few minutes. (*Sits at table c., and takes up a bundle of letters.*) You won't object to my opening these letters, will you?

HENRY. I—I fear I am disturbing you, sir.

HOPPER. Not at all, I assure you. I simply wish to occupy my hands; but my attention is all yours.

HENRY. You are very kind. (*Sits. A pause.*)

HOPPER (*opening letters*). Well—what can I do for you?

HENRY (*hesitatingly*). I—I thought perhaps you—you might be willing to help me, sir —

HOPPER (*encouragingly*). Yes? Go on.

HENRY. I feel greatly ashamed to ask for—for help again, sir, but I—I need money very badly to settle some—some — (*Hesitates.*)

HOPPER. Debts?

HENRY. Yes, sir. You see, I—I have lost some money.

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HOPPER (*sympathetically*). Lost it? Too bad.

HENRY. I—I lost it at cards, sir.

HOPPER (*quietly*). I am very glad to hear it, Henry.

HENRY (*surprised*). Sir?

HOPPER. If you persist in gambling, I am glad you lose.

HENRY. But, Uncle, you do not understand.

HOPPER. Yes—I think I do. This is the second time you have come to me for money for such a purpose, I believe.

HENRY. Yes, sir; the first time ——

HOPPER (*interrupting*). The first time I gave it to you. We had a little talk upon the subject then, and as I thought came to a complete understanding. But it appears that my words had absolutely no effect.

HENRY (*quickly*). No, no, Uncle; do not say that. You know that you have great influence with me ——

HOPPER. Your actions do not show it. Henry, my boy, when your father died I felt that I had a duty to perform. I have kept you; I clothe you; I feed you. You have had every opportunity for fitting yourself to become a useful member of society. You have lacked nothing.

HENRY. Yes, Uncle—one thing.

HOPPER. Nothing, Henry.

HENRY. I have never had money to call my own.

HOPPER. Money? You have not needed it.

HENRY. Often, sir. Not for the necessaries of life, perhaps; but there have been many times—ever since I was a boy—when I have felt unable to share the pleasures of my companions ——

HOPPER. Yes, I never encouraged you. I certainly would have been neglecting my duty if I had placed in your hands what would have led you into temptation.

HENRY. But I have been denied all innocent amusements—everything. My acquaintances have thought me stingy and mean, because I could not return their little gifts and kindnesses. That's what drove me to gambling, Uncle.

HOPPER. Nonsense.

HENRY. You cannot feel as I do, sir. (*Rises.*)

HOPPER. About gambling—no. I have endeavored to lead an upright life—to do my duty by my fellow man. The money I have accumulated has been

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gained through my own individual efforts, and I value it and my reputation too highly to risk either on the turn of a card. (*Rises and becomes more and more indignant.*) But you—you seem to care nothing for your reputation or for mine.

HENRY. Oh, Uncle!

HOPPER. You have no money of your own to squander, so you pile up debts, expecting me to pay them. Why, it is ungrateful in you, Henry!

HENRY. No, no, sir.

HOPPER. Yes, ungrateful. It shows a lack of appreciation of all that I have done for you. If you wish money, why don't you earn it?

HENRY. I have hoped, sir, that with your influence you could obtain me a situation —

HOPPER. No, no, my boy. Don't rely on me—on anybody. Depend upon yourself. Seek out some business position where you can have an opportunity to rise rapidly. (*Takes his hand.*) There's always room at the top, you know — And I shall be proud of you, and feel that my efforts in your behalf have not been entirely in vain.

HENRY. But, Uncle—my debts?

HOPPER. How much do you owe?

HENRY. About one hundred dollars, sir.

HOPPER. Hum! Not as bad as I expected. (*A slight pause.*) Well, give your note for the amount—then find a situation and pay your debts, with your first two months' salary. (*Enter MARGARET HOPPER, R. Hesitates in doorway.*) Ah, Margaret! Come in, my dear. (*Banteringly.*) Here, this naughty cousin of yours has been falling into evil ways again. What shall we do with him—eh?

MARGARET. He hoped that you would help him, father.

HOPPER. So he has been confiding in you, has he? I trust you gave him a thorough lecturing and some sound advice.

HENRY. She advised me to come to you, sir.

HOPPER. Indeed! I am glad she has so much influence with you. (*Lays his hand on HENRY'S shoulder.*) I hope you will always come to me with your troubles, my boy. You know the great interest I take in your welfare. Now turn over a new leaf, won't you?

THE RECKONING

Make a man of yourself. You will excuse me now?
I have some important business to attend to.

HENRY. Certainly, sir.

HOPPER. Remember, my boy, I am always glad to help
you in any way within my power. (MARGARET and
HENRY go toward R.) Margaret!

MARGARET (*stopping*). Yes, father.

(*Exit HENRY, R.*)

HOPPER (*going to table c. and sitting*). Margaret, I have
been greatly perplexed to know just what is my duty as
regards Henry's gambling habits.

MARGARET. Harry hoped that you would assist him in pay-
ing his debts.

HOPPER. And so I have.

MARGARET. You gave him the money? (*Eagerly.*)

HOPPER. No. But I have helped him in a far better way.
I have shown him how to be independent. When he
came to me about two months ago and begged for help,
I willingly paid his debts; but I fear I only encouraged
him to repeat his misdeeds.

MARGARET. But, father, I am sure Harry is very sorry —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Perhaps he is; though he cer-
tainly does not appear very penitent. But this habit
of gambling must be stopped before he becomes a
disgrace. (*Enter JERRY, L., bearing card plate. To*
JERRY.) Some one to see me, Jerry?

JERRY. Yes, sir. (*Presents card plate.*)

HOPPER. Ah—you may show the gentleman in here.

JERRY. Yes, sir.

(*Exit, L. MARGARET moves toward R.*)

HOPPER. One moment, Margaret. (MARGARET *stops*.)
There's a little matter of business. You are aware
that when your grandmother died last spring, she left
you a considerable sum, about fifty thousand dollars.

MARGARET. Yes, sir.

HOPPER. The estate has been settled, and is ready to be
divided among the different heirs. What do you in-
tend to do with your share?

MARGARET. I have not considered the matter at all, sir.

HOPPER. At present it is in the Depositors' National Bank,

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of which I am a stockholder. Would you—would you like me to find a good investment for you?

MARGARET. If you will, please.

HOPPER. Very well. You will be a rich girl some day, my dear. I have sometimes feared that the knowledge of that fact may have influenced your cousin Henry in his professions of love.

MARGARET. Oh, father!

HOPPER. Such a sum of money would prove a great temptation, Margaret.

MARGARET (*indignantly*). Not to Harry. You do him an injustice, sir.

HOPPER. I hope so, my child. I certainly shall never consent to your marriage until Henry has established himself in business and can support a wife. (*Enter JOHN ARMSTEAD, L.*) Ah, Mr. Armstead, I believe?

(Rises and goes to meet him.)

ARMSTEAD. Mr. Hopper.

HOPPER. Walk right in, sir (*shaking hands with him*); you know my daughter, do you not?

ARMSTEAD. Oh, yes; I think I can claim Miss Hopper as one of my friends.

MARGARET (*shaking hands with ARMSTEAD*). I hope so, Mr. Armstead. (*Moves toward R.*)

ARMSTEAD. I am not driving you away?

MARGARET. Oh, no,—please excuse me.

(Exit, R.)

HOPPER. Housekeeping duties must be performed, you know. Won't you be seated? (*Draws armchair left of table C.*) You'll find this chair comfortable, I think. (*ARMSTEAD sits left of table C., and HOPPER sits right of table C.*) My daughter has often sung your praises, Mr. Armstead, and your face is familiar, but I never felt that I could claim an acquaintance.

ARMSTEAD. Your name and face are well known to me, too, sir, but our occupations have never thrown us together.

HOPPER. You are in the law?

ARMSTEAD. Yes.

HOPPER. And a worthy representative, I have no doubt. But I have no law case to consult you about to-day.

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No; it is a matter of business, and business only. You say my name is familiar to you?

ARMSTEAD. Quite so.

HOPPER. Well spoken of, I hope?

ARMSTEAD. Very highly.

HOPPER. Good. Yes, my rating is A No. 1. I am a carpet manufacturer, as perhaps you know.

ARMSTEAD. I understood so.

HOPPER. I make a certain moderately priced line of goods. The secret of their manufacture belongs to me alone; and although there has been such a great depression in business throughout the country, I am thankful to say mine has increased instead of diminished.

ARMSTEAD. You are exceedingly fortunate.

HOPPER. Yes; but the credit is entirely due to my specialty. Now I find, Mr. Armstead, that if I am to fill the orders for my goods, my factories must be considerably enlarged. That brings me to the cause for this interview. I understand that you represent a number of capitalists who have placed their money in your hands for investment.

ARMSTEAD. It is true that one or two gentlemen have asked me to investigate any good investment I may hear of.

HOPPER. Ah! Well, I think I can offer you a first-class one.

ARMSTEAD (*perplexed*). You can?

HOPPER. Yes.

ARMSTEAD. May I ask in what?

HOPPER. My factories.

ARMSTEAD. I—I fear I do not understand. Do you intend to form a company?

HOPPER. Oh, no; I've not the slightest idea of such a thing. But as I told you, I wish to increase my business, and I would like to—to obtain from—well, say seventy to one hundred thousand for say two years—perhaps three.

ARMSTEAD. You wish to borrow?

HOPPER. Well—yes. I suppose you might call it that.

ARMSTEAD (*hesitating*). But—I—I thought—I—I did not know —

HOPPER (*interrupting—laughing*). That I was so poor? I suppose you wonder why a man who is reputed to be quite wealthy should wish to borrow?

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ARMSTEAD. To be candid, sir, it does seem somewhat strange.

HOPPER. Not when you understand my position. I have a number of securities I can sell, and thus raise the amount needed, but the money market is so low just now that I would have to sell at a considerable loss. Besides, what advantage would there be in sacrificing these investments, which pay me a good rate of interest, when I can obtain all the money I wish at lower rates?

ARMSTEAD. What security do you offer?

HOPPER. Well, I have carefully considered the matter, and prefer to give as security some real estate—my factories, for instance.

ARMSTEAD (*surprised*). You wish to mortgage them?

HOPPER. Yes, I believe that is the only word to express my meaning. I value my plant at two hundred and fifty thousand, in round numbers. Now, if your capitalists would be willing to advance one hundred thousand at five per cent.— (*Pauses.*)

ARMSTEAD. It's a large sum.

HOPPER. They certainly cannot find a safer investment.

ARMSTEAD. No—but I do not know that they care for a mortgage. I will have to consult with them before I can take any steps in the matter.

HOPPER. Oh, of course, of course; but—a—may I hear from you soon—to-day?

ARMSTEAD. Oh, yes. Within a few hours, I think.

HOPPER. Good. I leave the city to-night upon a business trip. Upon my return, I shall be glad to have you come out to Hopperton and see my property.

ARMSTEAD. Very well, sir, if the gentlemen I represent care to make such an investment.

HOPPER. In any case we shall be pleased to see you. We shall move out there, as usual, in a few weeks. But to return to business — (*Opens drawer and takes out papers.*) Here are the deeds and other papers belonging to my factories. (*Gives ARMSTEAD papers.*) Just take a look at them. (*A pause. Enter DR. WILLIAM McLAIN, L.*) Why, Dr. McLain! This is indeed a surprise.

(*Shakes hands with him.*)

McLAIN. A pleasant one, I hope, sir.

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HOPPER. How can you doubt it?

McLAIN. I can't.

HOPPER (*aside*). I wonder what he has come for? (*To McLAIN.*) Sit down and make yourself comfortable, and tell me all about the good people of Hopperton. But in the first place, what brings you to town?

McLAIN. To see you, sir. (*Sits.*) How are you?

HOPPER (*sitting*). I never felt better.

McLAIN. I thought perhaps you had had more trouble with your head —

HOPPER (*quickly and uneasily*). Nonsense, man—nonsense. Those attacks were only in your fertile imagination.

McLAIN. Perhaps so, sir; but you should take good care of yourself.

HOPPER. I always do.

McLAIN. As I told you last fall, when there is too much blood in the head, there's danger, under excitement, of a vessel bursting, and then —

HOPPER (*interrupting—startled*). Eh! (*Laughs in a forced manner.*) Ha—ha—ha—you are trying to frighten me. But come, confess; what has tempted you out of your shell?

McLAIN. Well, sir—you are always so kind (*hesitating*) I —I thought perhaps you—that is to say, I wanted to ask you if—if you would do something to help a few of the families of Hopperton.

HOPPER. Have they no work?

McLAIN. No, sir. They have lost their positions on account of sickness, and what little money they had saved is now all gone. They are in danger of starving, unless —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Why, this is too bad. I should have been notified long ago. We must do something immediately.

McLAIN. I knew you would help them, sir. You are always so generous.

HOPPER. It is my duty, Doctor—a duty to mankind. I will authorize you to do whatever is necessary in this matter. I shall be glad to pay for all purchases you may make.

McLAIN. Thank you, sir. You are very good.

HOPPER (*rising as if to end the conversation*). Nothing else I can do for you?

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MCLAIN (*rising*). Well, sir—there is another matter, but I—I don't wish to take your valuable time.

HOPPER (*seeing that ARMSTEAD is still engaged examining papers*). Oh, I can spare a few minutes more, I think.

(ARMSTEAD *finishes examining papers.*)

MCLAIN. I—I wished to speak to you about Mrs. Henderson —

HOPPER (*sharply*). Eh? What of her?

MCLAIN (*surprised*). I refer to the wife of John Henderson—your former manager.

HOPPER (*altering his manner*). Oh, yes, yes; of course. I—I misunderstood you. (*Indifferently.*) She's well, I hope.

MCLAIN. Very poorly, sir, I am sorry to say. (*Sits. HOPPER assumes an attitude of concern.*) Her consumption is gradually becoming more pronounced, and I fear she hasn't many more months of life.

HOPPER. Ah! (*Conceals a smile with his hand.*)

MCLAIN. I—I beg pardon, sir?

HOPPER. It's a great pity.

MCLAIN. It is, indeed. Her husband's death was a very great shock to her. People always imagined that he had saved some money, but she seems to be continually in need of help.

HOPPER (*somewhat impatiently*). And you wish me to assist her?

MCLAIN. Well, sir—I—I thought that if some one—if a means could be found to send her away to the mountains for a while —

HOPPER (*anxiously*). Would she recover?

MCLAIN. Not entirely, I fear—but it might lengthen her life a year or two, and life seems very dear to her just at present.

HOPPER. Why now, more than any other time?

MCLAIN. On account of her daughter.

HOPPER (*anxiously*). Her daughter?

MCLAIN. Yes; you know she ran away from home about ten years ago, and Mrs. Henderson never heard a word of her until last week.

HOPPER (*very anxiously*). She—she has not returned?

MCLAIN. No, sir. But a man who knew the girl before she left home—that was when the Hendersons lived up

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the Hudson—thinks that he saw her here in New York, stepping into a carriage on Fifth Avenue.

HOPPER. That is extremely improbable.

McLAIN. Yes; but Mrs. Henderson appears to believe it, and is even anxious to come to the city and begin a search.

HOPPER (*rising*). Nonsense! Perfect nonsense! Such a search would be the sheerest folly. The girl is dead long ago, I've no doubt.

McLAIN. I fear so, sir. (*Rises.*)

HOPPER (*returning to his former pleasant manner*). Well, I am very glad you called, Doctor; you should come oftener. Do whatever you think best as regards the poor people you mentioned. Be assured I shall endorse your actions.

McLAIN. And how about Mrs. Henderson, sir?

HOPPER. Well, I—I will try to—to make some arrangement. But you need not mention the fact to her.

McLAIN. Very well, sir.

HOPPER. You promise me?

McLAIN. Certainly, sir, if you wish it.

HOPPER. I do. I don't ask for praise. I try to do my duty; nothing more. (*Shakes hands with him.*) Well—good-morning. Thank you for coming.

McLAIN. Good-bye, sir.

(*Exit, L.*)

HOPPER (*to ARMSTEAD*). I am sorry to have taken so much of your time, Mr. Armstead. You find those papers all right, do you not?

ARMSTEAD (*rising*). Perfectly so, I think. I will talk the matter over with my friends and let you know the result very soon.

HOPPER. Very good. But one moment—I have some photographs of my factories and the plans also. You might take them along.

ARMSTEAD. I scarcely think they will be necessary, sir.

HOPPER. Not necessary, but they will give some idea of the buildings. I think they are in the other room. (*Crosses to R.*) Just wait a moment.

(*Exit, R.*)

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ARMSTEAD (*looking after HOPPER*). Strange! Very strange! What would Wall Street think if it heard that Mr. Nicholas Hopper, the wealthy carpet manufacturer, wished to mortgage his factories? (*Sits by table C. with his back to L. Thoughtfully.*) His credit is still first class, beyond a doubt. Yet there seems to be something insincere about him—something hidden. I scarcely know why I think so. Perhaps it was his manner when the Doctor spoke of that poor woman whose daughter had left home.

(*Enter MRS. KING, L.*)

MRS. K. (*thinking ARMSTEAD to be HOPPER*). I am sure you will pardon me, my dear Mr. Hopper, for entering unannounced, but — (ARMSTEAD *rises and turns.*) John!

ARMSTEAD (*starting; then controlling himself*). Mrs. King!

MRS. K. (*stepping toward him impulsively as if to shake hands, but stopping; nervously*). I—I—it has been a long time since—since we have met.

ARMSTEAD (*under constraint*). Yes.

MRS. K. (*after pause*). I—I did not expect to find you here.

ARMSTEAD. I am here upon business.

MRS. K. (*recovering her equanimity—laughing merrily*). I did not question your right. Probably you wonder what brings me here? I came upon business also.

ARMSTEAD (*under great self-control*). Mr. Hopper will return presently.

MRS. K. I am very glad he was not present to see our meeting, John; he might have imagined that we are not friends. (*A slight pause.*) That was what we agreed to be, was it not?

ARMSTEAD. Yes.

MRS. K. You came to me just before my wedding and told me that—that you would try to be my friend. Do you remember?

ARMSTEAD. I remember.

MRS. K. But you have not acted in a friendly way. I have not seen nor heard of you from that day until

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- this—not even after Mr. King's death. (*Smiles.*)
You—you used to be a good friend, John.
- ARMSTEAD (*bluntly*). Yes; I once asked you to marry me.
And do you remember your reply?
- MRS. K. Yes, I told you that I—I liked you very much
indeed, but ——
- ARMSTEAD (*interrupting*). But that you would never marry
a pauper—that was about the answer—wasn't it? Yes,
I loved you.
- MRS. K. (*smiling*). I wonder! What do you know of
love?
- ARMSTEAD (*with intense earnestness*). What do you know
of love? I brought you mine—the richest gift a man
can offer—and you laughed at me; I saw you flirting
with men whose reputations had been dragged through
the mud; I saw you marry, for money, an old man
whom you could never love. I endured all this, and
still I worshipped you. (*MRS. K. laughs nervously.*)
Oh, I was your slave. You knew you could bend me
to your slightest wish. Well, I have learned since
then, May. I have had some success, and I have
learned what is worth while. When I marry, if I do,
my wife will be something more than a flirt or coquette;
she will be a real woman, true to herself ——
- MRS. K. (*interrupting—angrily*). How dare you speak so!
What right have you to judge me! Why don't you
say what you think and call me an adventuress?
- ARMSTEAD. Because—I ——
- MRS. K. (*interrupting sarcastically*). Because you are a
gentleman. But you implied it. And you think I
cared nothing for your love?
- ARMSTEAD. I think you married for money.
- MRS. K. (*defiantly*). I did.
- ARMSTEAD. Of course your beauty and your power over men
tempted you to act as you might not otherwise have done.
You longed for wealth and now you have it without en-
cumbrance. You are free now to flirt and coquette
to your heart's content.
- MRS. K. Is that what you really think of the woman you
professed to love?
- ARMSTEAD (*earnestly*). Ah, May, if you had ever truly
loved, no such judgment could be spoken. Love would
have completely changed your life.

THE RECKONING

“Something the heart must have to cherish ;
Must love and joy and sorrow learn.
Something with passion clasp, or perish
And in itself to ashes burn.”

MRS. K. (*repeating—sadly*). “And in itself to ashes burn.” (*Impulsively*.) Oh, John, if you could but know how —

(*Enter HOPPER, R.*)

HOPPER (*not perceiving MRS. K.*). I am sorry to have kept you waiting, Mr. Armstead, but — (*Sees MRS. K. —surprised.*) Mrs. King!

MRS. K. (*laughing merrily*). How frightened you are!

HOPPER. I—I did not know you were here.

MRS. K. Oh, I have been here some time. Mr. Armstead has been good enough to entertain me.

HOPPER. You know each other?

MRS. K. Oh, yes, indeed—intimately—do we not, Mr. Armstead?

ARMSTEAD (*reservedly*). I have known Mrs. King for several years.

HOPPER (*jealously*). Indeed! Then I need not have made such haste. (*To ARMSTEAD.*) Here are the photographs, Mr. Armstead. They were not just where I expected to find them. (*Gives him photographs.*) You will return shortly?

ARMSTEAD. As soon as possible, sir.

MRS. K. You are not going to leave us?

HOPPER (*anxious that ARMSTEAD should go*). Business calls him, Mrs. King—important business.

(*Exit ARMSTEAD, L.*)

MRS. K. (*aside*). Not one word of good-bye. (*Aloud.*) What a very interesting man Mr. Armstead is.

HOPPER (*jealously*). I must confess he never impressed me as being anything extraordinary.

MRS. K. Indeed! Perhaps he has changed since I knew him so intimately years ago.

HOPPER (*half spitefully*). Doubtless it was your influence.

MRS. K. (*curtsying*). You flatter me.

HOPPER. I believe you are acquainted with every man in town.

THE RECKONING

- MRS. K. Oh, the green-eyed monster—eh?
- HOPPER. Yes, I am jealous; I acknowledge it.
- MRS. K. Don't you think it very foolish? (*Sits L. c.*)
- HOPPER. Yes; for you are utterly heartless.
- MRS. K. (*coily*). Oh, no—not quite.
- HOPPER. But you delight to add fuel to my jealousy at every possible opportunity. Why do you treat me no differently from the way you do other men?
- MRS. K. (*innocently*). Mr. Hopper! Do I? Well, you are different, you know. You're a captain of industry, or something like that, aren't you?
- HOPPER (*impatiently*). Bah!
- MRS. K. But don't be cross with me, will you? I thought you would be glad to see me this morning.
- HOPPER. So I am.
- MRS. K. You seemed very much surprised.
- HOPPER (*recovering his good humor*). I was.
- MRS. K. But didn't you receive my note?
- HOPPER. No. Did you send one?
- MRS. K. Of course I did.
- HOPPER (*hurrying to the table and searching through the pile of letters, some of which he has already opened*). Ah! (*Catches up a note and kisses it.*)
- MRS. K. (*laughing*). Oh, you foolish fellow! (*Rises.*) Don't read it now, wait until I have gone. I don't know what ridiculous things I may have written.
- HOPPER. But I——
- MRS. K. (*placing her hand upon his arm*). Please don't. (*HOPPER puts the letter in his pocket.*) That's a good boy. I simply said that if you could spare me a few minutes this morning. Every one acknowledges you an authority upon business matters, you know.
- HOPPER. Is that the only reason you came to me?
- MRS. K. (*coily*). I did not say so.
- HOPPER (*passionately*). Oh, you will drive me crazy. You know I worship the very ground you tread upon, and yet you——

(*Enter MARGARET, R.*)

- MRS. K. (*interrupting—to MARGARET*). Good-morning, Margaret. (*Goes to meet her.*)
- MARGARET (*joyfully*). Mrs. King!

THE RECKONING

MRS. K. You see I have remembered my promise to call upon you this week.

MARGARET. I knew you would not forget.

MRS. K. Where shall we go to have a nice, long talk?

MARGARET. The parlor?

MRS. K. Yes; we will not disturb your father there.

(*Puts her arm around MARGARET, and they move toward R.*)

HOPPER. But—but you said you wished to speak to me about——

MRS. K. (*interrupting*). About a little matter of business. After a while—when you are ready to——

HOPPER (*interrupting*). I am ready now.

MRS. K. (*pointedly*). To talk about business?

(*Exeunt MARGARET and MRS. K., R.*)

HOPPER. I believe an evil spirit is personified in that woman. Sometimes she tortures me so, I feel as if I could kill her. And yet—so great is her power over me, I would do anything to please her. If only I knew that she cares nothing for me—but at times she makes me imagine I'm the one and only—well—I'll show her. Wait until my cotton deal goes through—and I get my yacht. That will fix her.

(*Enter JERRY, L.*)

JERRY. There's a poor woman wants to see you, sir.

HOPPER. I have no time for beggars. Tell her I am busy.

(*Sits by table c.*)

JERRY. But I don't think as she is a beggar, sir, though she ain't dressed very 'andsome. She says she knows you, sir, an'——

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Nonsense! Every beggar knows me.

JERRY. Yes, sir; I—I suppose so. But she says you know her, sir. Her name is somethin' like Henson.

HOPPER (*rising*). Mrs. Henderson!

JERRY. That's it, sir.

HOPPER (*somewhat agitated*). I—I can't see her. Why should she come here? I won't see her.

JERRY. Very good, sir. (*Moves toward L.*)

THE RECKONING

HOPPER (*calling*). Jerry!

JERRY. Yes, sir.

HOPPER (*aside*). I suppose this will be as good an opportunity as any to settle the matter. (*To JERRY.*) Jerry—perhaps it would be just as well for me to see the woman. You may show her here.

JERRY. Just as you say, sir. (*Aside.*) He's sort o' changeable this mornin'.

(Exit, L.)

HOPPER (*sitting*). No doubt she has come to demand her share of the proceeds from her husband's patent. (*Laughs.*) Let her. I've been expecting it—but she won't get anything—not one cent. Perhaps she has come to the city to look for her daughter. She'll never find her. If I have failed after two months' search, she certainly cannot succeed. But I wonder why she comes to me? She surely cannot have heard of my efforts to find the girl?

(Enter MRS. HENDERSON, L.)

HOPPER (*going to meet her*). Why, Mrs. Henderson, how do you do? You are looking well.

MRS. H. Then I don't look as I feel, sir; I fear I shall never be well again.

HOPPER. Oh, cheer up! Cheer up! Don't be despondent. Long road that has no turning, you know. You will regain your strength before long, I have no doubt.

MRS. H. I am not despondent, sir. But I fully realize my danger. When consumption reaches the stage it has with me, there is but little chance of recovery.

HOPPER (*aside—sitting*). Just as I feared; she is after money. (*Aloud.*) But don't you think you are running a great risk of catching cold by coming to the city?

MRS. H. Oh, sir, I couldn't help it. I have come to look for my daughter, sir. (*Sits.*)

HOPPER (*relieved*). Indeed! (*Aside.*) Then she isn't going to bother me about her husband's patent, after all.

MRS. H. I have waited ten long weary years for her to return, but I have never heard a word from her—not one word.

THE RECKONING

HOPPER (*aside*). I hope she never will.

(He nods solemnly to MRS. H.)

MRS. H. Oh, sir, if only you knew how I have hoped and prayed during all these years; how I have looked so eagerly for her return day after day; how I have run to the door at every knock and opened it only to be disappointed.

HOPPER. But your daughter would not return to Hop-perton?

MRS. H. No, sir; she would go to her old home on the Hudson. But she will find my address if she goes there.

HOPPER. But what reason have you for believing her still alive?

MRS. H. Oh, sir, I'm sure she can't be dead! And last week, sir, a man who knew her when she was but a girl, told me he saw her here in New York.

HOPPER. It was probably but a resemblance.

MRS. H. But she passed right beside him, sir, and got into a carriage. I feel sure he was not mistaken, for he described her so exactly. (*Beseechingly.*) Oh, please, sir, do try to believe it. It means so much to me. I have come all the way to the city to ask for your help.

HOPPER. My help!

MRS. H. You seem so kind to every one, I thought you would be willing to ——

HOPPER (*interrupting*). But, my good woman ——

MRS. H. (*interrupting and rising*). Oh, don't refuse, I beg of you. I know of no one but you who can help me.

HOPPER. I—I should be very glad to render any assistance within my power if—if I knew of any way ——

MRS. H. (*interrupting*). Find my daughter, sir!

HOPPER. Find her? How? You must see that to make a search among several million people, without even being sure that she is alive, would be just throwing time and money away.

MRS. H. But I must find her. Oh, what shall I do! (*Impulsively.*) Will you lend me money, sir?

HOPPER. Lend? Impossible.

MRS. H. I promise to repay you.

THE RECKONING

HOPPER. But my dear woman, I never lend under any circumstances. It is against my principles.

MRS. H. (*hesitating*). But—but, sir, have you not some money which—belongs to me?

HOPPER. I owe you money?

MRS. H. I—I would not have mentioned it, if—if I had not been in such great need.

HOPPER (*with dignity*). To what do you refer?

MRS. H. I—I thought, sir—my husband often told me before his death that he had invented a kind of carpet while he was manager of your factories—the kind you sell now,—and that you agreed to pay him something on every yard manufactured. You signed a paper.

HOPPER. Oh, you must be mistaken; your husband never could have made such a statement.

MRS. H. Yes, indeed he did, sir. He said he had a written agreement.

HOPPER (*very uneasily*). Eh! You have it?

MRS. H. My husband told me he had hidden the paper away safely and that I would find it after his death.

HOPPER (*anxiously*). And you have found something you thought was —

MRS. H. No, sir, but —

HOPPER (*interrupting—angrily*). Then what nonsense to come to me with such a statement. The idea of my signing a paper of that kind.

MRS. H. But surely, sir, you remember —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). I remember nothing of the sort. I owe you money, indeed! Why, you occupy a house belonging to me, and haven't paid your last month's rent. This is simply a device of yours to obtain money.

MRS. H. Oh, sir, I —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Yes, and I believe your pitiful plea for help to find your daughter is nothing but a begging scheme. Your daughter is dead, and you know it.

MRS. H. (*bursting into tears*). Oh!

HOPPER. Now you needn't pretend to cry. It won't have any effect upon me. (*Enter JOSEPH SKINNER, L.*) You can go now. And don't come to me with your begging lies again, do you understand?

(*Exit MRS. H., L., sobbing.*)

THE RECKONING

SKINNER (*chuckling*). You seem to have moved the lady to tears.

HOPPER. She's a beggar, nothing more. What's the news?

SKINNER. He has returned.

HOPPER. Andrews?

SKINNER. Right.

HOPPER. Where is he?

SKINNER. At the office, sir.

HOPPER. Fetch him.

SKINNER. I left word that if you wished to see him, I would 'phone.

HOPPER. Very well. Step into the hall and do so.

SKINNER. Right.

HOPPER. And tell Jerry to show the man here as soon as he comes. (*Exit SKINNER, L.*) Now I shall learn if the search of the past week has proved any more successful than the former ones. If the daughter be dead, then I have nothing to fear, for even should that agreement be found, what could the woman do? (*Sits by table c.*) But in any case, perhaps it will be just as well to see Mrs. Henderson after I return from my business trip and pay her something to sign off. I'll do it. (*Laughs.*)

(*Enter SKINNER, L.*)

SKINNER. He'll be here directly, sir.

HOPPER. We have a few minutes. What's new in cotton?

SKINNER. The market is bullish. (*Sits.*)

HOPPER. That's good.

SKINNER. But I heard to-day of another lot. I don't understand it.

HOPPER (*angrily*). But you ought to understand it. It's your business to understand it.

SKINNER. No doubt, no doubt.

HOPPER. I have placed the matter entirely in your hands, and you should have known just how much cotton was in the market before advising me to buy.

SKINNER. I thought I did.

HOPPER. That is no excuse. You shouldn't have thought. When you came to me six months ago——

SKINNER (*interrupting*). Seven, sir.

HOPPER. It makes no difference. When you told me that the cotton crop was unusually small this season, and

THE RECKONING

- advised me to corner the market, I consented because I thought that you had carefully studied the situation.
- SKINNER. So I had.
- HOPPER. Then it was time wasted, for you appear to know nothing. (*Passionately.*) By heaven! man, do you know that I had to give my notes for the last three lots?
- SKINNER. No doubt, no doubt.
- HOPPER. They fall due in six weeks. If I can't meet them, do you know what will be the consequence?
- SKINNER. I can guess.
- HOPPER (*vehemently*). But I shall meet them. The money will be raised in some way. This new lot you have heard of—who holds it?
- SKINNER. Smith & Co.
- HOPPER. They seem to have it all. Is it a large one?
- SKINNER. Not very.
- HOPPER. What will buy it?
- SKINNER. About fifty.
- HOPPER. Fifty thousand! (*A pause.*)
- SKINNER. You will take it?
- HOPPER. I suppose I shall have to.
- SKINNER. Right.
- HOPPER (*aside*). I must raise it, even if I have to mortgage the house.
- SKINNER. I think you have all the cotton in the country—a—a—unless Smith & Co. have another lot.
- HOPPER. If they have I can't buy it.
- SKINNER. It won't matter if the lot should be a small one.
- HOPPER. No; but if it should be large——
- SKINNER. Then the bottom would fall out of your corner in cotton.
- HOPPER. And I should be ruined.
- SKINNER. You know best about that.
- (*Enter ROBERT ANDREWS, L.*)
- ANDREWS. Mr. Hopper, sir——
- HOPPER. Come in, Andrews. (*To SKINNER.*) Mr. Skinner, if you will entertain yourself in the sitting-room a few minutes——
- SKINNER. Certainly, sir.
- HOPPER. I wish to see you about another matter before you leave.
- SKINNER. Right.

THE RECKONING

(Exit, R.)

HOPPER. Well, my man, what luck?

ANDREWS (*sitting*). Very little, sir.

HOPPER. You have found nothing?

ANDREWS. Nothin' that can be depended on, sir.

HOPPER. Have you been up the Hudson, as I directed?

ANDREWS. Yes, sir. The farmers in the neighborhood remember the Henderson family quite well, an' told me how the daughter run away from home. They say John Henderson an' his wife was all broke up over it, an' they moved away from that part of the country about eight years ago. That's when they come to Hopperton, sir.

HOPPER. But could you learn nothing about the girl after she left home?

ANDREWS. I hear she come here to New York.

HOPPER. Hum! But you have heard nothing to make you believe that she is still alive?

ANDREWS. Nothin' sure.

HOPPER. I scarcely thought you would. No doubt the girl is dead long ago. But you may continue the search here in the city until further notice.

ANDREWS. Yes, sir.

HOPPER. By the way, you have never told any one that you are making this search?

ANDREWS. No, sir.

HOPPER. Good. See that you don't—not even your wife. Another thing; Mrs. Henderson will probably move in a month or two from the house she now occupies; how would you like to take it?

ANDREWS. I—I—it's much larger than the one we have, sir.

HOPPER. And you think the rent will be too high? No, I will make it the same as you pay now.

ANDREWS. You are very good, sir.

HOPPER. When you move in, I want you to—to make a thorough search of the premises, and bring to me all the papers you may find.

ANDREWS (*hesitating*). But—but, sir, suppose they belong to Mrs. Henderson?

HOPPER. Bring them to me. They are sure to be mine, anyway.

THE RECKONING

ANDREWS. Mrs. Henderson was very kind to my wife when she was sick, and I don't want to do nothin' to —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Andrews, whose employ are you in, mine or Mrs. Henderson's?

ANDREWS. Yours, sir, but —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Very well. While you are in my employ I expect you to do as I tell you. Whose clothes are those you are wearing?

ANDREWS. You bought 'em, sir.

HOPPER. You remember the rags you wore two months ago?

ANDREWS. Far too well, sir.

HOPPER. You came to me and begged for work, stating that your wife was sick, and that you were heavily in debt. Have you paid all the money you owed?

ANDREWS. Not half of it, sir.

HOPPER. No; I thought not. You were in my debt for two months' rent. I forgave you; took you into my employ; paid your wages in advance; and in this very room you took off your rags, and put on decent clothes, purchased with my money. (*Rises.*) Now if you wish to leave my employ, you are at perfect liberty to do so. But, understand me—you must return the money I have advanced to you; you must pay me that two months' rent, and take off those clothes.

ANDREWS (*rising*). But I—I have spent the money you gave me, sir.

HOPPER. So much the worse for you. Come—you must decide now. My man will give you the bundle of rags you left here, and you may go. (*A pause.*) Well?

ANDREWS (*hesitating*). I scarcely know, sir.

HOPPER. Very good. (*Strikes the call bell, which is upon the table.*) I have no time to waste. If poverty is pleasant to you, I am sure you are welcome to it. (*Enter JERRY, L.*) Jerry —

ANDREWS (*interrupting*). Oh, sir, I'll do it. Whatever you want, sir. I couldn't stand seeing my wife starve.

HOPPER. There is no reason why you should. (*To JERRY.*) Jerry—a — Tell Mr. Skinner I wish to see him. He is in the sitting-room.

JERRY. Yes, sir.

(*Exit, R.*)

THE RECKONING

HOPPER. Now, my good fellow, do your work faithfully, and you will find it to your advantage. You may go now and renew your search. When Mrs. Henderson's house is unoccupied, I will notify you, and then your family can move in.

ANDREWS (*humbly*). Very well, sir.

(*Exit, L.*)

HOPPER (*laughing*). It isn't very difficult to know how to manage a man who has undergone the suffering and distress of poverty; he never cares to repeat the experience.

(*Goes to table C.; sits and writes.*)

(*Enter SKINNER, R.*)

SKINNER (*after pause*). You wished to speak to me, sir?

HOPPER. Yes. When were you in Hopperton last?

SKINNER. A week ago yesterday.

HOPPER. The factories were running—full time?

SKINNER. You know better than I do, sir.

HOPPER. Yes, I was out yesterday.

SKINNER (*aside*). I wonder what in the deuce he's driving at.

HOPPER. Skinner, here is a note I have written to Mr. White, my manager, ordering him to make a ten per cent. reduction on the wages of all hands employed—

SKINNER (*surprised*). Sir!

HOPPER. The reduction to go into effect the first of next month.

SKINNER. I wouldn't, if I were you.

HOPPER. Why?

SKINNER. The men will strike.

HOPPER. Nonsense. One-half of the carpet manufacturers in the country have done this; the other half have closed their mills entirely.

SKINNER. No doubt, no doubt.

HOPPER. I must have money.

SKINNER. You'll lose money if you are not careful.

HOPPER. Why should I? To save is the best way to earn in these times. I wish you to take this note to Mr. White to-day.

SKINNER (*taking note*). Just as you say, sir.

THE RECKONING

HOPPER. And now you had better go, and close with Smith & Co., for that lot of cotton, at once.

SKINNER. Right.

(Exit, L.)

HOPPER. I fear I have made a great mistake in trusting so much to that man. But it is too late now. I will either make a fortune in this cotton venture, or lose one.

(Enter MRS. K., R.)

MRS. K. (*gayly*). Well—have you time to talk business now, Mr. Hopper?

HOPPER (*rising and going to meet her*). My time is always entirely at your service. I have been just overrun this morning with beggars, and——

MRS. K. (*interrupting*). I hope you imply nothing personal?

HOPPER. You know I do not, Mrs. King. I referred to a woman who came here—begging for help to find her daughter.

MRS. K. (*interested*). Had she—had she lost her?

HOPPER. Yes—the girl ran away from home.

MRS. K. Ran away! Poor girl—I pity her.

HOPPER. Why should you? If she has suffered she deserves it.

MRS. K. (*sadly*). Yes, she deserves it.

HOPPER. The girl is probably dead long ago.

MRS. K. If not, perhaps she would be far better off to be dead. (*Resumes her gaiety.*) But this is not talking business, is it? I wish to ask your advice about making an investment.

HOPPER. Ah! May I ask the amount that you wish to invest?

MRS. K. About forty thousand dollars.

HOPPER. You couldn't make it fifty?

MRS. K. Why should I?

HOPPER. Well, I know a—a mortgage—a first-class one in the country; but I—I don't think I could let—I—I—mean I don't believe you could get it for less than fifty thousand.

MRS. K. Well, money is very scarce nowadays, you know.

HOPPER (*aside*). I am sorry to say I do.

THE RECKONING

MRS. K. But if you think this investment is safe ——

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Perfectly so; perfectly. It's gilt edged—but I—I will have to attend to it for you. The owner of the property is anxious his name should not be mentioned in the matter. The only way to make this investment would be through me. I—I will collect the interest from my friend quarterly and pay you, just as if —— (*Hesitates.*)

MRS. K. As if I had lent the money to you.

HOPPER. Exactly.

MRS. K. (*rising*). Well, I will consider the matter.

HOPPER (*rising*). You are not going?

MRS. K. Don't you think my visit has been long enough for one day?

HOPPER. No. But you will come again?

MRS. K. Perhaps—about business.

HOPPER. And can I never talk of anything else?

MRS. K. What could be more interesting?

HOPPER. You.

MRS. K. The subject would become monotonous, don't you think?

HOPPER (*passionately*). Never. Oh, why are you always so distant and reserved?

MRS. K. Am I?

HOPPER. You are perfectly indifferent to me.

MRS. K. (*coily*). Perhaps I only seem so.

HOPPER (*eagerly*). And you will not always be so cold?

MRS. K. Yes—here.

HOPPER. Not everywhere?

MRS. K. I did not say so.

HOPPER (*seizing her hand and kissing it passionately*). You are an angel! (*Enter ARMSTEAD, L.*) I adore you!

(*Again kisses her hand. MRS. K. sees ARMSTEAD, and snatching her hand from HOPPER, stands embarrassed. HOPPER glares at ARMSTEAD angrily.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*A room in Mrs. H.'s cottage in Hopperton.*
MRS. H. *discovered reclining upon lounge down R.*
MISS SARAH HOPPER *stands by table C., taking fruit from basket.*

MRS. H. Won't you take a seat, Miss Hopper? Please do.

SARAH. Thank you; I can stay but a very few minutes this morning. I just dropped in to bring you this fruit; I thought you might enjoy it.

MRS. H. You are very thoughtful and kind, Miss Sarah; every one is good to me.

SARAH. And you will be well enough to go out again very soon, I feel sure.

MRS. H. Never.

SARAH (*cheerfully*). Oh, yes, you will. Why, you are looking better to-day than you have for a week. I noticed it as soon as I entered.

MRS. H. Yes; I feel better and happier than I have for many a year, but it is because my mind and heart are free from suffering; not my body.

SARAH. And what is it that has acted so like a medicine?

MRS. H. Good news, ma'am; good news. I have heard ——

(*Stops abruptly.*)

SARAH. From your daughter? Oh, Mrs. Henderson! (MRS. H. *does not answer. A slight pause.*) Is she alive? Have you found her?

MRS. H. (*hesitating*). I—I can't tell you what I have heard, ma'am; I—I am sorry—but—but please don't ask me, I mustn't tell you.

SARAH (*pleasantly*). Please do not feel that I wish you to tell me if you would rather not.

MRS. H. But you have been so good to me, Miss Sarah.

SARAH. That is no reason why I should know all your joys or sorrows. There are some things that cannot be told. (*Rises.*) And now I must be going. My brother has

THE RECKONING

been away from home for a month, and he returns to-day.

MRS. H. (*startled*). To-day!

SARAH. Yes, this morning. Perhaps you would like him to come and see you; I will ——

MRS. H. (*excitedly*). No, no, Miss Sarah. Don't let him come; please don't let him.

SARAH (*surprised*). You do not wish to see him?

MRS. H. I—I ask your pardon, Miss Sarah, if I have said anything I shouldn't. I—I didn't mean any harm, but—but you won't ask Mr. Hopper to come to-day?

SARAH. Certainly not, if you do not care to see him. You had better take a little nap. Something has excited you—perhaps I have been here too long, and so wearied you.

MRS. H. Oh, no, indeed, ma'am.

SARAH. I must go now, at any rate. (*Takes up basket.*)

MRS. H. But you will come again?

SARAH. Oh, yes—very soon. But good-bye, for the present.

MRS. H. Good-bye, Miss Sarah, and thank you very much for all your kindness. (*Exit SARAH, L. C.*) It does seem very ungrateful, but I fear she would tell Mr. Hopper, and I don't want him to hear—at least not until I know what is best to be done. (*Draws the letter from under the pillow-cushion, and kisses it.*) Just to think—after all these years! and she is coming home—coming home to-day! (*Again kisses the letter.*)

McLAIN (*without*). Whoa, boy!

MRS. H. Dr. McLain!

(*Hurriedly hides the letter under the pillow-cushion.*)

(*Enter McLAIN, L. C.*)

McLAIN (*standing in doorway*). Good-morning, Mrs. Henderson. (*Looks out L. C.*) Whoa, boy! Stand still now. Whoa! (*Comes down c.*) It's a little risky to leave a horse unhitched, but I've put him upon his honor. (*Places his hat upon table c.*)

MRS. H. So good a master ought to have an obedient horse, sir.

McLAIN. Now, none of your taffy, Mrs. Henderson. You must be better. I always think when my patients begin to flatter me that they are well on the road to recovery.

THE RECKONING

- Let me feel your pulse. (*Feels Mrs. H.'s pulse.*)
Hum! a little too high. Anything been exciting you, eh?
- MRS. H. Oh, no, sir; I—I—— (*Hesitates.*)
- MCLAIN (*interrupting*). Who has been here this morning?
- MRS. H. No one but Miss Sarah Hopper, sir.
- MCLAIN. I scarcely think she is to blame. Have you been taking your medicine regularly?
- MRS. H. Yes, sir; at the time you directed.
- MCLAIN. Hum! Mrs. Henderson, I want to have a talk with you—a very plain talk. (*Draws up chair by sofa, down R., and sits.*) I think you would prefer me to speak openly, rather than to conceal what is best for you to know.
- MRS. H. Certainly, sir. I think I can guess what you wish to speak about. I know that I am dying.
- MCLAIN. Oh, no, no, Mrs. Henderson—not so bad as that—not nearly as bad. Why, I hope to see you considerably better in a few days—but it depends entirely upon yourself.
- MRS. H. How?
- MCLAIN. There must be no more excitement of any kind. Ever since that hemorrhage last week, I have been afraid of another—and another might—might ——
- (*Hesitates.*)
- MRS. H. Kill me?
- MCLAIN. To be perfectly candid, yes.
- MRS. H. (*quietly*). I have felt so.
- MCLAIN. Then you must take especial pains to obey my instructions. No excitement, you understand? If you hadn't gone to town a month ago——
- MRS. H. (*interrupting*). But, Doctor, I couldn't stay at home.
- MCLAIN. But it did you harm. You caught cold, and this is the result. It did you a great deal of harm. Has Mr. Hopper been here recently? (*Rises.*)
- MRS. H. (*shortly*). No.
- MCLAIN. Perhaps he is still away from home. But he will visit you soon after his return—I feel sure of it. When I called upon him in New York, he said—well, he led me to suppose that he takes a great interest in you.
- MRS. H. (*pointedly*). He does. I don't doubt it.

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MCLAIN. But then that is nothing unusual with him. He is so kind.

MRS. H. (*bitterly—half aside*). Kind!

MCLAIN. And so generous.

MRS. H. (*aside*). When it forwards his interests.

(A knock is heard L. C.)

MCLAIN. Some one is knocking, I think. I will be your man servant if you will allow me. (*Opens door. Speaks off.*) Why, Miss Margaret—good-morning. (*As if answering a question.*) Yes, for a little while. You are not likely to excite her.

(Enter MARGARET and ARMSTEAD, L. C.)

MARGARET (*to MCLAIN*). Let me introduce Mr. Armstead, Dr. McLain.

MCLAIN (*shaking hands with ARMSTEAD*). I am glad to know you, sir.

MARGARET (*going to MRS. H., R.*). Good-morning, Mrs. Henderson; please don't get up.

MCLAIN (*to ARMSTEAD*). Seems to me I have met you somewhere before, sir.

ARMSTEAD. I think you called at Mr. Hopper's one day while I was there, about a month ago.

MCLAIN. In New York?

ARMSTEAD. Yes.

MCLAIN. Are you the gentleman who was examining some papers?

ARMSTEAD. The same.

MCLAIN. I thought I had seen you before.

MARGARET. Mr. Armstead, this is Mrs. Henderson.

MRS. H. You will excuse me for not rising, sir?

ARMSTEAD. Certainly; I would not wish you to do so.

(Draws up chair by sofa, and joins in conversation with MRS. H.)

MCLAIN. Miss Margaret— (*Beckons her L. Aside, to MARGARET.*) May I ask a favor?

MARGARET (*aside, to MCLAIN*). Certainly, Doctor.

MCLAIN. Don't stay long.

MARGARET. No, only a very few minutes.

MCLAIN. Mrs. Henderson is quite feverish to-day, and the quieter she remains, the better.

THE RECKONING

(McLAIN and MARGARET converse together, L.)

MRS. H. (to ARMSTEAD). And is this the first time you have been in Hopperton, sir?

ARMSTEAD. Yes. I have come out to see Mr. Hopper upon business.

MRS. H. (as if disappointed). You are in his employ?

ARMSTEAD. Oh, no, I am a lawyer.

MRS. H. (interested and pleased). A lawyer!

McLAIN (crossing to R.). Well, friends, I must be moving on. (Takes his hat from table c.) I'll call again this afternoon, Mrs. Henderson. (Chances to look out of window R. F.) By Jingo! There goes my horse walking quietly down the road. Evidently I have stayed too long. Good-bye all! Good bye! (Exit, L. C., crying to horse.) Whoa, boy! Whoa!

MRS. H. (to ARMSTEAD, earnestly). You say you are a lawyer, sir?

ARMSTEAD. Yes.

MRS. H. (eagerly). Perhaps—perhaps you could — (Stops.)

MARGARET. I think we had better be going, Mr. Armstead.

(ARMSTEAD rises.)

MRS. H. Oh, sir, please stay for a few minutes longer. I—I want your advice about—about something. (To MARGARET.) You won't object, will you, Miss Margaret?

MARGARET. No, but I fear Dr. McLain would not approve.

ARMSTEAD. It will not be best to weary you. Some other day when —

MRS. H. (interrupting). No, no, sir; I must speak to you to-day—this morning. It will do me no harm. It will benefit me, I am sure of it.

ARMSTEAD (aside, to MARGARET). There seems to be something upon her mind.

MARGARET (aside, to ARMSTEAD). Yes—perhaps you had better remain.

ARMSTEAD (to MRS. H.). If I can do anything for you, Mrs. Henderson —

MRS. H. Then you will stay? Thank you very much.

MARGARET. Good-bye, Mrs. Henderson. (To ARMSTEAD.)

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I will see you again before you return to the city, Mr. Armstead?

ARMSTEAD. I hope so.

(Exit MARGARET, L. C.)

(ARMSTEAD sits by sofa R.)

MRS. H. Miss Margaret and her aunt are very good to me and—and—— *(Hesitates.)* Are you intimate with the family, sir?

ARMSTEAD. I know Miss Margaret quite well.

MRS. H. *(aside)*. Perhaps I should not ask him what I had intended. *(To ARMSTEAD.)* Is Mr. Hopper a friend of yours?

ARMSTEAD. No.

MRS. H. *(eagerly)*. You do not like him?

ARMSTEAD. Oh, I did not intend to imply that. I know Mr. Hopper but very slightly.

MRS. H. Mr. Armstead, you are a stranger to me, sir, but if you are Miss Margaret's friend, I am sure I can trust you.

ARMSTEAD. I think you can. *(A slight pause.)* You said you wished advice.

MRS. H. I am greatly in need of it, sir.

ARMSTEAD. Legal advice?

MRS. H. Yes, sir. I—I scarcely know how to tell you. But—but suppose I—had invented something and made an agreement with—with some one that he could manufacture it, provided he paid me a certain amount upon every sale. And suppose he broke the agreement——

ARMSTEAD. Well?

MRS. H. Couldn't he be compelled to pay me?

ARMSTEAD. That would depend.

MRS. H. Upon what, sir?

ARMSTEAD. Several things. But have you made such an agreement with any one?

MRS. H. No, sir, not exactly.

ARMSTEAD. Mrs. Henderson, I must ask you to speak openly if you wish my help, for not knowing the whole truth, I might advise you wrongly.

MRS. H. Well, sir—I will tell you everything. My husband invented a certain kind of carpet a year or two

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before his death and made an agreement with—with Mr. Hopper——

ARMSTEAD (*surprised*). Mr. Hopper!

MRS. H. Yes, sir. He was to manufacture the carpet in his factories, and pay my husband something on every sale.

ARMSTEAD. And didn't he do it?

MRS. H. Only up to the time of my husband's death.

ARMSTEAD. Perhaps the agreement expired then.

MRS. H. Oh, no, sir; it was to continue with the heirs.

ARMSTEAD. And Mr. Hopper has never paid you anything?

MRS. H. Not one cent.

ARMSTEAD. H'm! But you have the agreement, of course.

MRS. H. I can't find it, sir.

ARMSTEAD. It has not been lost?

MRS. H. I—I do not know where it is.

ARMSTEAD. Are you sure such a paper exists?

MRS. H. Oh, yes, sir. My husband showed it to me, and during his last illness he told me that he had hidden it in a safe place and that I would find it after his death.

ARMSTEAD. It will be necessary to find that agreement, Mrs. Henderson.

MRS. H. Can nothing be done without it?

ARMSTEAD. Very little—unless your husband patented his invention.

MRS. H. I think he did, sir.

ARMSTEAD. You are sure?

MRS. H. Perfectly.

ARMSTEAD. Then Mr. Hopper has been using a process that does not belong to him, and can be made to pay heavy damages.

MRS. H. I—I would not wish to injure Miss Sarah or Miss Margaret in any way. They have been very kind to me—but Mr. Hopper has been very cruel.

ARMSTEAD. Cruel!

MRS. H. I used to consider him a generous and kind-hearted man, but now I think him kind only when it meets his selfish interests. My daughter left home about ten years ago, sir. She was not a bad girl, but she could not endure poverty, and she was very fond

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of gaiety—far too fond, her father thought, and he was very severe with her. I had waited patiently for ten long years, but I felt that I could wait no longer. I heard that my daughter had been seen in New York, and I resolved to go to the city, and make a search. But I was poor. The money my husband had saved was all spent, and I was even in debt. Then, in my distress, I thought of Mr. Hopper. I went to the city with the purpose of seeing him. I told him that I was ill; I told him how my heart bled for my dear child; and I entreated him to help me make a search.

ARMSTEAD. And he refused?

MRS. H. Yes. Then I begged him to lend me money, and mentioned the agreement he had made with my husband. And he—he called me a beggar—a liar, and ordered me from the house.

ARMSTEAD. I can scarcely believe it possible.

MRS. H. It is true; every word of it.

ARMSTEAD (*aside*). The hard-hearted hypocrite!

MRS. H. He has a very good reason for not wishing my daughter to be found; but though he has refused to help me, heaven has had pity and answered my prayer.

ARMSTEAD. Have you heard from your daughter?

MRS. H. Yes—at last!

ARMSTEAD. Indeed! I am very glad.

MRS. H. I received a letter in which she begged for my forgiveness—as if I had anything to forgive. And she is coming home. I wrote her a long reply, telling her how I had longed all these years for her, and about her father's death, and his business agreement with Mr. Hopper. But I did not send the letter, sir; for I received a second one from her saying that she was coming home—(*half aside*) coming home to her poor old mother. (*Takes the letter from under the pillow.*) Here it is, sir—read what she says.

ARMSTEAD (*taking the letter, looks at the address and starts*). Is—is this your daughter's handwriting?

MRS. H. Yes, sir, that is May's letter.

ARMSTEAD (*surprised*). May!

MRS. H. That is my daughter's name, sir.

ARMSTEAD (*eagerly*). May! May what?

MRS. H. She married a Mr. King.

THE RECKONING

ARMSTEAD (*rising and letting the letter fall*). King!
May King!

MRS. H. What is the matter, sir?

ARMSTEAD (*controlling himself*). Pardon me—I—I—sustained a—a slight shock.

MRS. H. Do you feel ill, sir?

ARMSTEAD. Oh! I am all right now. (*Picks up letter.*)
You wish me to read this letter?

MRS. H. If you please, sir.

ARMSTEAD (*after reading letter*). She is coming home to-day.

MRS. H. Yes, sir; this morning, on the New York train.
Oh, if only I had been well enough to meet her at the station.

ARMSTEAD. Would you—would you like me to go?

MRS. H. You are very kind, sir. I—I did not wish Mr. Hopper to know of my daughter's return—at least, not until we had planned for the future.

ARMSTEAD. Yes, it will be best to keep it a secret for a while, if possible.

MRS. H. And you will meet her? Perhaps you had better go now.

ARMSTEAD. Yes, I want to be at the station when the train arrives, and it is about due, I think.

MRS. H. Go out that way by the kitchen door—(*pointing out R.*) there is a short cut to the station through the woods.

ARMSTEAD. Very well, and I shall return the same way.

(*Goes toward R.*)

MRS. H. But—but, Mr. Armstead, how will you recognize my daughter?

ARMSTEAD. Oh, I shall know her. (*Aside.*) I fear I can never forget her.

(*Exit, R.*)

MRS. H. Coming home! I can scarcely realize it. Coming home! Heaven is very good to me. Oh, how much I have to be thankful for. (*HOPPER looks in at window, then knocks at door L.*) Was that a knock? (*The knock is repeated.*) Who's there? (*Enter HOPPER, L. C.* MRS. H., *aside—agitated.*) Oh!

THE RECKONING

HOPPER. Good-morning, Mrs. Henderson ; good-morning.

(Comes down c.)

MRS. H. *(aside)*. What if he should remain until my daughter comes !

HOPPER. How has your health been ? Pretty good ?

MRS. H. *(shortly)*. No.

HOPPER. Indeed ! I am extremely sorry to hear it. *(A pause.)* Has a gentleman named Armstead been here ?

MRS. H. He is gone.

HOPPER. Gone ! Strange I did not meet him on the road. Margaret told me that she had left him here. I have been away from home for about a month, and have just returned. Has he been gone long ?

MRS. H. No. *(Eagerly.)* Perhaps you can overtake him if—if you go.

HOPPER. Perhaps I can. No doubt he has returned by some other way. I will hasten back again.

(Goes up toward L. C.)

MRS. H. *(aside)*. He is going.

HOPPER *(stopping)*. Oh, by the way, Mrs. Henderson, while away I have been thinking about—about the matter you mentioned to me a month ago. I refer to the agreement you imagined I had made with your husband.

MRS. H. *(eagerly)*. You acknowledge there was such an agreement ?

HOPPER. Oh, no, no—not at all ; such an idea is ridiculous. But you are sick and greatly in need of money, and I would like to assist you. Dr. McLain tells me that you should go away to the mountains somewhere. Of course this claim you have made is entirely without foundation, but I am willing to pay you say five hundred dollars if you will sign this paper —

(Takes paper from his pocket.)

MRS. H. I will sign no paper.

HOPPER. Eh !

MRS. H. Your anxiety to have me sign a paper proves that an agreement between you and my husband did exist.

THE RECKONING

HOPPER (*angrily*). It's false!

MRS. H. My claim is a just one, and you know it.

HOPPER (*passionately*). I know it's a lie!

MRS. H. (*half rising—intensely*). Nicholas Hopper, you are a scoundrel —

HOPPER. What!!!

MRS. H. An unprincipled hypocrite.

HOPPER (*furiously*). How dare you!

(*Raises his fist as if to strike her.*)

MRS. H. Strike me! Strike me, you coward! You have wounded my heart far more than you can ever injure my body.

HOPPER. Bah!

MRS. H. May heaven treat you as you have treated me!
(*Rises and becomes more and more vehement and excited.*) May you suffer even as you have made me suffer.

HOPPER. Stop!

MRS. H. May your deceitful tongue, with which you make promises only to break them —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). That will do—I —

MRS. H. May your lying tongue be struck dumb!

(HOPPER, *frightened and furious, utters an exclamation, and crumpling the paper which he holds in his hand, hurls it into MRS. H.'s face. MRS. H., tremendously excited, utters a cry, and raising her hand to her chest as if in great pain, falls back upon the sofa, where she lies motionless.*)

HOPPER (*furiously*). You refuse to do what I wish?— Good! I have offered you comfort—and you chose poverty. You shall have your choice. You shall leave this house this very day. You owe me rent; pay it—or go to jail. I'll make you suffer for your curses.

(*Exit, L. C.*)

(*A long pause.*)

(*Enter MRS. K., R. Pauses and looks around the room eagerly.*)

THE RECKONING

MRS. K. (*seeing MRS. H. upon the sofa R., cries joyfully*).
Mother! (*Runs to sofa.*) Mother, I have come home.
She is asleep, but I cannot wait. I must awaken her.
(*Kneels beside the sofa.*) Mother, dear—mother!
Speak to me. Mother! Tell me you forgive me. (*Enter*
ARMSTEAD, R.) Mother! Mother!! Mother!!!

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*The study in ARMSTEAD'S New York residence.*

(*Enter ARMSTEAD, R., opening a letter.*)

ARMSTEAD. It is not very often Miss Margaret Hopper favors me, and when she does it is generally a request of some kind. Well, I could not ask for a stronger proof of her friendship. (*Sits by fireplace L., and reads the letter—after pause.*) Short, but to the point. I am afraid this will prove a rather delicate matter to handle. Henry Stratton is not a boy, and I doubt very much if he will relish my criticism. I scarcely think I would enjoy it—(*thoughtfully*) and yet—and yet—if, when I was his age, some one had pointed out to me the dangers that lay in my path, perhaps I might have avoided them. (*Reads from the letter.*) “I will try to find some excuse to call upon you on Wednesday”—that’s to-day—“and will bring Harry with me. Then if you will detain him in some way, I will leave and you can talk with him alone. I am sure Harry will gladly tell you his troubles if he is at all encouraged. Please help him for both our sakes. I know you can.” (*Folds the letter and pockets it.*) Hum! That’s very flattering to my talents, at any rate. Miss Hopper is certainly quite a schemer. (*Rises.*) Well, I’ll try to carry out my part of the program. I must sustain my reputation.

(*Enter BARNEY, C.*)

BARNEY. Be yez to hum, sor?

ARMSTEAD. Unless your eyes deceive you, Barney.

BARNEY. Me eyes got nothin’ to do with it, sor—beggin’ your pardin. I’ve larnt to put me eyes in me pocket, fur many’s the toime at me last place I seen Mr. Brown was to hum an’ he sent word to the door that he was out. At me last place, sor, I’ve sometimes wondered —

ARMSTEAD (*interrupting*). Is there any one to see me, Barney?

THE RECKONING

BARNEY. Sor?

ARMSTEAD. Is any one at the door?

BARNEY. Not that I knows on, sor. (*Goes to window R.*)

ARMSTEAD (*aside*). He's one of the dumbest men I ever saw.

BARNEY (*after looking out of the window*). No, sor, there's no one at the door. As I was sayin', at me last place —

ARMSTEAD (*interrupting*). Is any one down-stairs?

BARNEY. Sor? Down-steers?

ARMSTEAD. Yes; to see me.

BARNEY. There was some man, sor, but —

ARMSTEAD. You didn't tell him I was out?

BARNEY. No, sor, I didn't want to lie. I said ye was in, but I didn't know if ye was to hum, an' if he didn't keer to wait —

ARMSTEAD (*interrupting*). Is he here now?

BARNEY. Faith, I don' know, sor, but —

ARMSTEAD (*interrupting*). Barney, go down and send the gentleman here immediately.

BARNEY. He be-ent a gentleman, sor.

ARMSTEAD (*angrily*). I don't care if he's a chimpanzee; send him up.

BARNEY. Yis, sor, but —

ARMSTEAD (*interrupting*). Go; do you hear?

BARNEY. Yis, sor, I hears. (*Aside.*) I'm afeard this place won't fit me.

(*Exit, c.*)

ARMSTEAD. I am afraid he won't fit this place. How he managed to keep his last position so long, I can't imagine. Why, he will sour my temper in less than a week; it's beginning to turn now. (*ANDREWS appears c., and hesitates. To ANDREWS.*) Come in, sir.

(*Enter ANDREWS, c.*)

ANDREWS. I—I don't want to take your time, sir, but —

ARMSTEAD (*pleasantly*). Oh, I am not busy.

ANDREWS. Miss Margaret Hopper advised me to come to you, sir.

ARMSTEAD. Indeed!

THE RECKONING

- ANDREWS. I wanted to speak to you about—about Mrs. Henderson, sir.
- ARMSTEAD (*interested*). Mrs. Henderson! You mean the poor woman who died in Hopperton a couple of weeks ago?
- ANDREWS. Yes, sir. Has she any heirs?
- ARMSTEAD. Why do you ask?
- ANDREWS. Because—because I've found a paper that belonged to her husband, sir, an'—an' I wanted it to get into the right hands.
- ARMSTEAD. But I don't quite understand. Where did you find this paper?
- ANDREWS. At the house she used to live in, sir. It was hid away in the wall back of a picture.
- ARMSTEAD (*aside*). Can it be the paper that Mrs. Henderson told me about? (*To ANDREWS.*) Do you occupy the house now?
- ANDREWS. Yes, sir. Mr. Hopper told me I could have the house—which is quite a large one—at the same rent I paid for the house I was livin' in, provided I—provided—(*hesitating*) I don't know as I ought to tell you, sir.
- ARMSTEAD. I don't ask to know your agreement with Mr. Hopper.
- ANDREWS. I have no agreement now, sir. Mr. Hopper employed me to—to—I think I had better tell you everything.
- ARMSTEAD. Do just as you think best.
- ANDREWS. He paid me to make a search for Mrs. Henderson's daughter May, who had run away from home about ten year ago.
- ARMSTEAD (*surprised*). Mr. Hopper made a search?
- ANDREWS. Yes, sir.
- ARMSTEAD (*aside*). I don't understand that. (*To ANDREWS.*) Why did he wish to find Mrs. Henderson's daughter?
- ANDREWS. I don't know, sir, I'm sure. I was very poor an' had been out of work for some time, when Mr. Hopper sent for me an' offered to pay me good wages an' forgive me two months' rent I owed him, if I would do what he wanted. Of course, I was glad of the chance. After I had been workin' about a month, he told me that Mrs. Henderson was goin' to move, an'

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that I could take her house if I wanted to. He said that just as soon as I moved in he wanted me to make a thorough search of the premises, an' any papers I found I was to bring to him.

ARMSTEAD (*aside*). I begin to understand now.

ANDREWS. I told him I didn't want to bring him papers that belonged to Mrs. Henderson, an' he became very angry an' insisted that I should bring him everything I found. He said if I refused he would turn me an' my family out in the street, an' make me pay every cent I owed him. I—I was a coward, sir, an' had to give in, for I couldn't bear to think of my wife an' children starvin'.

ARMSTEAD. Then why have you come to me?

ANDREWS. Because my conscience made me, sir. Mrs. Henderson nursed my wife when she was sick.

ARMSTEAD. I am glad that you have felt so conscientious in the matter.

ANDREWS. I can't help thinkin' that this paper is the one Mr. Hopper wanted to find. It is some kind of agreement he made with John Henderson.

ARMSTEAD. Ah! Have you it with you?

ANDREWS. Yes, sir. (*Cautiously.*) But—but had Mrs. Henderson any heirs?

ARMSTEAD. Yes; one.

ANDREWS (*eagerly*). Her daughter? Is she alive?

ARMSTEAD. I am glad to say she is.

ANDREWS. Thank heaven! Does she know of her mother's death, sir?

ARMSTEAD. Yes, and it was a great shock. She came—she had determined to return home, but too late.

ANDREWS. Poor girl!

ARMSTEAD. I am sure that she will be very thankful to you, and will see that you do not suffer for want of work.

ANDREWS. Thank you, sir.

ARMSTEAD. I can give her this paper, if you wish—or would you prefer to keep it until you can deliver it in person?

ANDREWS. No, sir; I feel sure it will be safe with you.

(*Takes envelope from his pocket and gives it to ARMSTEAD.*)

ARMSTEAD. Very well. (*Places the envelope in the table*

THE RECKONING

drawer.) Now if you will give me your name and address——

ANDREWS. Joseph Andrews, sir.

ARMSTEAD (*rising*). Suppose you sit down here, and write it for me.

(ANDREWS *sits at table L. C., and writes.* ARMSTEAD *goes to window R.*)

ANDREWS. There, sir.

ARMSTEAD (*looking out of the window*). Hello! Here comes Mr. Hopper up the steps now.

ANDREWS (*agitated*). Oh, sir, I—I don't want to meet him.

ARMSTEAD. No, it will not be best for him to find you here. (*Points R.*) Step into that room until he goes.

(*Exit ANDREWS, R.* ARMSTEAD *closes the door after him; then goes to table L. C., takes the paper upon which ANDREWS has written his name—folds it and puts it in his pocket.*)

(*Enter BARNEY, C.*)

BARNEY. Be yez to hum, sor?

ARMSTEAD. Yes; show Mr. Hopper here.

BARNEY (*amazed*). Y-yis, sor. (*Aside.*) How does he know the gint's name?

ARMSTEAD. And, by the way, Barney, if there should be any other callers this afternoon, you may send them up. I shall be at home until further notice. You understand?

BARNEY. Yis, sor.

(*Exit, C.*)

ARMSTEAD. I took him by surprise that time, but I am afraid I will be kept busy manufacturing surprises if I want to keep his tongue quiet. I suppose Mr. Hopper has come to see me in reference to the note I sent him yesterday. (*Enter HOPPER, C. To HOPPER.*) Good-afternoon, sir.

HOPPER (*appearing worried*). Mr. Armstead, I called to see you about the mortgage on my property.

ARMSTEAD. You received my note?

HOPPER. Yes; but it will be impossible for me to wait

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until next week for the money. Seventy-five thousand dollars may not mean much to the gentlemen you represent, but at the present time such a sum would prove immensely valuable to me. I must have a check to-day.

ARMSTEAD. But, Mr. Hopper, that will be impossible.

HOPPER. I must have it.

ARMSTEAD. You know that to transfer stocks and bonds into cash takes longer than a few hours.

HOPPER (*sharply*). If you hadn't the money, why did you offer it to me? I have some notes which I must meet to-morrow, or—or — (*Decidedly.*) Armstead, you must raise this money.

ARMSTEAD. I understood that you were borrowing in order to extend your business.

HOPPER (*embarrassed*). Yes, yes—so I—I am—I intend to. But I—I must free myself from debt first.

ARMSTEAD. I fear I cannot help you. You had better look elsewhere.

HOPPER (*excitedly*). Man, I'm depending on you. Go to these gentlemen and explain matters. No doubt they have funds at hand from which they can draw.

ARMSTEAD. They are away from the city —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Then telegraph them.

ARMSTEAD (*coldly*). I'll do it if you wish, but it is useless.

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Yes, do it immediately. Every minute is of value.

(ARMSTEAD *sits at table c. and writes. Enter SKINNER, c., hurriedly.*)

SKINNER (*to HOPPER*). You told me to bring all telegrams here, sir. (*Gives HOPPER the telegram.*)

HOPPER (*tearing open telegram, reads and utters an exclamation; speaks to SKINNER*). Smith & Co. offer another lot of cotton.

SKINNER. No doubt, no doubt.

HOPPER (*to SKINNER*). I can't buy it.

SKINNER. Just as you say.

HOPPER (*to SKINNER*). Telegraph them that I can't—no, say that I don't want it.

SKINNER. Right.

HOPPER. And—and ask them to extend my notes for—no, I'll attend to the matter myself. (*To ARM-*

THE RECKONING

STEAD.) You will send me the reply to your telegram, as soon as you receive it, Mr. Armstead?

ARMSTEAD. Certainly.

HOPPER. Make them raise the amount somehow. I must have it.

(Exit, c.)

SKINNER (*aside*). I'm afraid the bottom of his corner in cotton is weakening.

(Exit, c.)

ARMSTEAD (*rising*). Hopper certainly seems to be badly in need of money. I must make some inquiries before he gets any through me. What a scoundrel the man is! (*Goes R. and calls.*) Andrews! (*Enter ANDREWS, R.*) Mr. Hopper has left, so you can go now without any danger of meeting him.

ANDREWS. Very well, sir.

ARMSTEAD. I will let you hear from me in a day or two. When I appoint a time and place to meet me, you will come?

ANDREWS. Certainly, sir.

ARMSTEAD (*offering him his hand*). Well, good-bye until you hear from me.

ANDREWS. Good-bye, sir, and thank you for helpin' me.

(Exit, c.)

ARMSTEAD. I think I should thank him for helping me. I promised to send this telegram, and I will. After that, we'll see. (*Calls.*) Barney! I had better put the paper Andrews brought in some safer spot than a table drawer. (*Opens table drawer and takes out envelope. Calls.*) Barney! Where is that man?

(Enter BARNEY, c.)

BARNEY. Yis, sor.

ARMSTEAD (*giving him telegram*). Barney, take this message to the telegraph office, and tell them to send it immediately. (*Goes toward R.*)

BARNEY. Sind it where at, sor?

ARMSTEAD. They will know at the office.

BARNEY. Yis, sor, but ——

THE RECKONING

ARMSTEAD (*interrupting*). Now, don't stop to argue.

BARNEY. But, Mr. Armstid, sor——

ARMSTEAD (*interrupting*). Go at once; do you understand?

BARNEY. Y-yis, sor. (*Exit ARMSTEAD, R.*) Well, I niver seen the loikes o' thet. Here's comp'ny downsteers, an' whin I'm after axin' 'im if he's to hum he shuts me mouth loike a trap an' sets on me. Sure an' I don't know whither he's to hum or not. Faith, I'll jist fitch the comp'ny here an' lave 'em, an' if he's not to hum, he kin till 'em so hisself.

(*Exit, c.*)

(*Enter ARMSTEAD, R.*)

ARMSTEAD. I never saw that Irishman's equal for dumbness. I believe he would talk himself blind asking questions, if I encouraged him by answering one or two. (*Enter MARGARET and HENRY, C. To MARGARET.*) Why, Miss Hopper, this is a very pleasant surprise—I mean it would be if I—I—oh, you understand. (*To HENRY.*) How do you do, Mr. Stratton? You're just the man I wish to see.

HENRY. I am, sir?

ARMSTEAD. Yes; about—about a little matter of business.

MARGARET. Then I—I will leave him here and——

ARMSTEAD (*interrupting*). Oh, don't be in a hurry, Miss Hopper.

MARGARET. But, I called only to—to—— (*Hesitates.*)

ARMSTEAD. To see me, of course.

MARGARET. Yes—to—ask if a man has been here.

ARMSTEAD. By the name of Andrews?

MARGARET. Yes. Evidently you have seen him.

ARMSTEAD. He left but a few minutes ago.

MARGARET. He came to me and appeared very anxious to learn something about Mrs. Henderson's relatives—if she had any—and I thought that possibly you may have learnt something during the confidential talk you had with her the day of her death, so I advised him to go to you.

ARMSTEAD. I am very glad you did.

MARGARET. I—I must be going now. (*To HENRY.*)

Harry, will you meet me at the station?

THE RECKONING

HENRY. Yes—when?

MARGARET (*going up c.*). In time for the five o'clock train.

HENRY. Very well, I'll be there.

ARMSTEAD (*following MARGARET up c.*). I won't detain him very long, Miss Hopper.

MARGARET (*aside to ARMSTEAD*). You are very kind—to—detain him at all, sir.

ARMSTEAD (*aside to MARGARET—laughing*). Oh, you little schemer!

MARGARET (*aside to ARMSTEAD*). It's in a good cause. Good-bye.

(*Exit, c.*)

ARMSTEAD (*coming down c.*). Are you in business, Mr. Stratton?

HENRY. No, sir.

ARMSTEAD. Studying for a profession?

HENRY. No, sir.

ARMSTEAD. A man of leisure, eh? (*Sits.*)

HENRY. I have tried to obtain some business position, sir, but have failed. (*Sits.*)

ARMSTEAD. Are you particular as to the nature of the employment?

HENRY. No, sir; I would be only too glad to get anything—but it is useless to try.

ARMSTEAD. Oh, don't be discouraged.

HENRY. But, sir, I—you do not know—it is absolutely necessary for me to earn money, and—and—
(*Hesitates.*)

ARMSTEAD. You are in debt?

HENRY (*as if ashamed*). Yes, sir. (*A slight pause.*)

ARMSTEAD. Mr. Stratton—I think it will be best for me to be perfectly honest with you. I have heard of your need of money and your—

HENRY (*interrupting*). Has Margaret told you?

ARMSTEAD. Yes.

HENRY. She should not have troubled you.

ARMSTEAD. I am very glad she took the trouble to tell me. Do you know that you are a very fortunate young man to have this sweet girl take such an interest in you?

HENRY. Far more fortunate than I deserve.

THE RECKONING

ARMSTEAD. Whatever may happen you know that there is some one in the world who loves you : some one who will sympathize in your disappointments and rejoice in your successes. (*Sighs and half aside.*) Ah, how happy a man could be with such a woman to love ! (*Quickly—as if to check his sad thoughts.*) Yes, yes—you are fortunate, truly fortunate. Mr. Stratton, I think I can help you.

HENRY (*eagerly*). Do you know of a position, sir ?

ARMSTEAD. Yes.

HENRY. And can I obtain it ?

ARMSTEAD. I think so.

HENRY. You are very kind.

ARMSTEAD. Not at all. I know a wealthy man who wishes a private secretary. I will recommend you, but whether you will retain the position or not, will depend entirely upon yourself.

HENRY. But—but you know nothing about my habits, sir.

ARMSTEAD. Of gambling ?

HENRY. Did Margaret tell you of that too ?

ARMSTEAD. Yes.

HENRY. I am almost ashamed to confess it, sir.

ARMSTEAD. Perhaps—perhaps you had a good excuse.

HENRY. I was driven to gambling through want of money.

ARMSTEAD. But now that you will be able to earn a comfortable salary, you will give up what injures you, won't you, my boy ? For your own sake and for the sake of the girl who loves you ?

HENRY. I promise you, sir.

ARMSTEAD. Thank you. I believe your promise to be as good as your oath. And now in order that you may be able to cut entirely loose from everything that binds you to your old habits, we must pay your debts. (*Sits at table and opens check book.*) How much do you owe ?

HENRY (*quickly*). I—I couldn't let you give me the money, sir.

ARMSTEAD. Oh, I don't intend to make you a gift ; but I would like to lend you the amount.

HENRY. But, sir —

ARMSTEAD (*interrupting*). We will do the thing in a businesslike way, if you prefer. I will give you a check, and you can give me your note.

HENRY. It is very good of you —

THE RECKONING

ARMSTEAD. No—I consider it an opportunity to help a friend, and I am glad to avail myself of it. How much do you need?

HENRY. About one hundred and forty dollars, sir.

ARMSTEAD (*writing check*). “Henry Stratton—one hundred—and—fifty——”

HENRY. Forty, sir.

ARMSTEAD. I added ten for luck. There you are.

(*Gives HENRY the check.*)

HENRY. But the note?

ARMSTEAD. Very well, I will write one for you. (*Writes a note and gives it to HENRY, who takes a pen, signs the note and returns it to ARMSTEAD.*) Now everything has been done lawfully and in order. You have borrowed money and given your promise in writing to return it six months after date. Of course if you do not pay me, you will expect to be prosecuted?

HENRY. Certainly, sir.

ARMSTEAD. This paper you have signed would give me that right.

HENRY. But I will pay you.

ARMSTEAD (*rising*). Of course you will. (*Tears in pieces the note HENRY signed.*) And even if you do not, I shall not prosecute you. (*Goes to fireplace, L.*) When a man lends money to his friend, he should not wish any other promise of payment than a verbal one. (*Throws the pieces of paper in the fireplace, L.*) Surely that ought to be enough.

HENRY (*rising*). I—I wish you knew how much happier you have made me, sir.

ARMSTEAD (*embarrassed*). I—I—but—— (*Coughs, then looks at his watch.*) Hello! I had no idea of the time. If you wish to meet Miss Hopper at the five o'clock train, you will have to hurry.

HENRY. Is it so late as that?

ARMSTEAD. I am sorry to have to acknowledge it. I will write you just as soon as I see the gentleman I told you of.

HENRY. Let—let me thank you, Mr. Armstead, for all you have——

ARMSTEAD (*interrupting*). No; all thanks belong to Miss

THE RECKONING

Margaret. (*They go toward c. Enter Mrs. K., c.*)
Mrs. King!

MRS. K. I do not wish to intrude.

HENRY. I was just about to leave, Mrs. King. (*To ARMSTEAD, grasping him by the hand.*) Good-bye, Mr. Armstead.

(*Exit, c.*)

MRS. K. (*aside*). I scarcely know what to say.

ARMSTEAD. I—I expected to—to call upon you this evening, Mrs. King.

MRS. K. Upon me?

ARMSTEAD. Yes; to—to—about a matter of business.

MRS. K. (*disappointed*). Oh!

ARMSTEAD. I—I wished to see you—about a paper that I have that concerns you.

MRS. K. Nothing more?

ARMSTEAD. I—I know of nothing else.

MRS. K. Perhaps I should expect no more—and yet —— (*Earnestly.*) Oh, if you knew how I long for a friend, some one to advise and help me.

ARMSTEAD (*after slight pause*). If you had returned home ——

MRS. K. (*interrupting*). Yes, yes; I know what you would say. I should have returned years ago. But I thought she was dead—you know that? I never should have left my home—I realize it now—now when it is too late; but the yearning for power which has so cursed my life, and the dread of poverty, tempted me.

ARMSTEAD. You have gained the power you sought. (*Quietly.*)

MRS. K. (*sadly*). Yes; the power that wealth brings; but not the power to make true friends. I—I come to you to confess my weakness, and to ask for help—but you—you will never forgive me.

ARMSTEAD (*with an effort—after pause*). What is it you wish?

MRS. K. (*eagerly*). You will help me? I want advice about the matter you told me mother had talked to you about the last day of her life.

ARMSTEAD. You mean the agreement between your father and Mr. Hopper?

THE RECKONING

MRS. K. Yes.

ARMSTEAD. The paper has been found.

MRS. K. Found!

ARMSTEAD. Yes, by the man who now occupies the house where your mother lived.

MRS. K. Then it is true that there was such an agreement?

ARMSTEAD. Yes.

MRS. K. And Mr. Hopper never paid my mother the money that was rightfully hers. (*Rises—passionately.*)

Oh, how I hate him! To think of all the suffering dear mother endured! To think that it was within this man's power to add comfort—yes, even years—to her life, and he refused to help her! I wish I could make him suffer all that she had to bear!

ARMSTEAD. You wish for revenge?

MRS. K. Revenge? (*A pause.*) No. I, too, wronged my mother, by leaving her. But—but I wish to take from Mr. Hopper every cent that he stole from her. (*Sits.*)

ARMSTEAD. Why should you wish the money?

MRS. K. Just for this. If I can obtain the money that rightfully belonged to mother, I will make it a memorial to her, and use it in helping poor women that have no friends. I am sure she would like that.

ARMSTEAD. Has Mr. Hopper any suspicion that you are Mrs. Henderson's daughter?

MRS. K. Not the slightest.

ARMSTEAD. But he knew that you were at the funeral.

MRS. K. Yes; but I went with Miss Hopper and Margaret, and they did not imagine the truth. Margaret had asked me to spend a few days with her that week, so that my presence in Hopperton at the time of mother's death was not a surprise.

ARMSTEAD. But you paid all the funeral expenses, did you not?

MRS. K. Oh, yes; but they thought I did it simply out of respect to the memory of a poor woman. The day after the funeral I returned home, and since then have refused to see all callers. During these two weeks I have carefully considered the matter, and now I wish—I am determined that Mr. Hopper shall know who I am. But—but I need a friend to advise me. (*Pleadingly.*) Will you not be that friend?

THE RECKONING

ARMSTEAD. I would gladly help you—if—if — (Hesitates.)

MRS. K. If you believed me to be sincere?

ARMSTEAD. Candidly—yes.

MRS. K. (*sadly*). I have no way to prove my sincerity.

(*A pause.*)

ARMSTEAD (*rising*). The paper found in your mother's house has been brought to me. I have it in the other room. I will show it to you.

(*Exit, R.*)

MRS. K. (*bitterly*). He will not forgive me. Oh, if I had but appreciated the value of an honest man's love, I might have become a true woman. My life would have been of some use, and instead of thirsting for power—the power to bring men to my feet, I might have made them my friends. But it's too late now; it's too late. In the whole wide world there is not one being who loves me—no, not one.

(*Enter HOPPER, C., hurriedly. Perceives MRS. K., and stops, surprised.*)

HOPPER. Mrs. King! You here?

MRS. K. (*aside*). The man I have been trying to avoid.

HOPPER. I have just come from your house. Why is it that you have refused to see me every time that I have called?

MRS. K. I have not wished to see—any one.

HOPPER. But you have taken no notice of my letters. You know that I adore you, and yet you are as cold as ice. Have you no heart?

MRS. K. (*coldly*). I don't know. Certainly none for you, Mr. Hopper.

HOPPER. Oh, come, it's too late for that tune. You know I can make you happy. (*Passionately.*) I cannot live without you. Will you marry me—at once? To-day?

MRS. K. (*decidedly*). No!

HOPPER. Yes, you will. Come, let's end our dilly-dallying over it. You promised to marry me. Why not now? Come!

THE RECKONING

MRS. K. (*indignantly*). Promised to marry you? Never!

HOPPER (*laughing*). Oh, you remember it well enough.

Why, you little rogue! (*Attempts to embrace her.*)

MRS. K. (*breaking free*). How dare you!

(*Enter ARMSTEAD, R. Stops in doorway.*)

HOPPER. What! You pretend you don't care for me?

MRS. K. I hate you!

HOPPER (*puzzled*). You hate me?

MRS. K. (*pointing to c*). Leave me instantly! Go!

HOPPER. You cannot mean——

MRS. K. (*interrupting—vehemently*). Go, I say——

HOPPER. But—but I——

MRS. K. (*interrupting*). Not another word—go! (*Exit*

HOPPER, C. *She bursts into tears and throws herself in armchair c.*) Oh, have I fallen so low! So low that he should dare to insult me! Oh, that I had one true friend!

ARMSTEAD (*advancing to armchair—earnestly*). Mrs. King—May—I will be that friend.

MRS. K. (*eagerly*). You?

ARMSTEAD (*giving her his hand*). As far as it lies within my power.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE.—*The sitting-room in HOPPER'S country-seat.*
JERRY discovered, dusting.

JERRY. He's got somethin' on his mind. I never seen him act so curious like afore. Why, he can't set still a minute, an' fiery—whew! I'm dead afeared to go near him. If he'd had a gun handy, I believe he would have filled me full of holes hours ago. (*Goes to table L. C., and begins to dust it.*) Just look at that table now. Everything down side up. 'Tain't no use for me tryin' to keep things straight if Mr. Hopper is goin' to act so crazy like.

(*Enter HOPPER, L., with hat and coat.*)

HOPPER (*snappishly*). Jerry! (*JERRY starts and drops the dusting-brush on the table.*) Leave those things alone!

JERRY. Y-yes, sir, I—I was just —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Hold your tongue!

JERRY. Y-yes, sir.

HOPPER. Has Mr. Skinner arrived yet?

JERRY. No, sir. (*Aside.*) That's the third time he has asked me that question this mornin'.

HOPPER (*looking at his watch*). Why in the deuce doesn't he come? (*To JERRY.*) Jerry, I am going to the station. If any one calls, say that I will return shortly.

JERRY. Certainly, sir. (*Exit HOPPER, C.*) Holy smoke! but I'm glad he hasn't got no gun about him. I'm afeared he ain't just right in his head; leastways he don't act it.

(*Enter MARGARET and HENRY, R.*)

MARGARET. Yes, Harry, I am very much worried about father; he is certainly not at all well. (*JERRY goes up C.*) Jerry!

JERRY. Yes, ma'am.

MARGARET. Miss Sarah wishes to see you.

THE RECKONING

JERRY. Very good, ma'am.

(Exit, R.)

(MARGARET and HENRY sit upon sofa down R.)

HENRY. Uncle appears very anxious about something.

MARGARET. Perhaps he has received bad news.

HENRY. He may have heard something when he was in the city yesterday. I never saw him so restless and excited as he was last evening.

MARGARET. He has so much to worry him.

HENRY. Yes, far too much.

MARGARET. Poor father!

HENRY (*impulsively*). I wish he were poor.

MARGARET. Why, Harry!

HENRY. I know it is selfish—perhaps unmanly in me to have such a wish, but—but Margaret, when I think of my poverty as compared to the wealth you will inherit, I feel as if I had no right to care for you.

MARGARET. Perhaps you think I have no right to care for you?

HENRY. I have often wondered why you do.

MARGARET. Why? I scarcely know. Perhaps because you care for me. But, Harry, you know that whether you are wealthy or poor, it makes not the slightest difference to me. And now that you have made your start —

HENRY (*interrupting*). Yes, thanks to you and Mr. Armstead.

MARGARET. You will be independent.

HENRY. And I shall try to prove worthy of Mr. Armstead's kindness.

MARGARET. He has indeed been very kind.

HENRY. He said that all thanks belonged to you, and that I was very fortunate to have such a sweet girl to take an interest in me.

MARGARET (*laughing*). I fear he was trying to flatter.

(Enter HOPPER, C. HENRY and MARGARET rise.)

HOPPER (*not perceiving them and going to table L. C.*). No telegram yet. I'll make Skinner smart for this.

THE RECKONING

MARGARET (*approaching*). Father, dear, are you feeling ill?

HOPPER (*shortly*). No.

MARGARET. Can I do anything for you?

HOPPER. Yes; don't bother me.

MARGARET (*reproachfully*). Oh, father!

HOPPER. Mind your own business.

(MARGARET *begins to cry*.)

HENRY (*aside, to MARGARET*). Don't cry, Margaret. Uncle is greatly worried about something. Don't cry.

MARGARET (*crying*). Yes, yes, he is worried. He does not know what he is saying.

HENRY. Come, I think we had better leave him.

(Exeunt MARGARET and HENRY, L.)

HOPPER. It's very strange that I have heard nothing. I especially instructed Skinner to telegraph me the first thing this morning, and to come out on an early train. Perhaps he is waiting for a reply from Smith & Co. They certainly must consent to extend my notes. It will be to their advantage. If they refuse, then— (*Frantically*.) Oh, this suspense will drive me crazy! Why doesn't he come? (*Goes to window L. C. and looks out—a pause—comes down C.*) Everything seems to be united to ruin me. Companies in which I have largely invested are failing; interests and dividends that I have counted upon have been passed; and now this strike in my carpet mills. What fools the men are! They prefer no wages rather than accept a reduction. Very well—let them starve! (*Goes to window L. C.*) Why doesn't Skinner come? He has led me deeper and deeper into these speculations, and now that I am in over my depth, he leaves me to drown. He doesn't appear to care whether I am ruined or not. Why doesn't he keep me posted? (*Goes to table L. C.*) I'll telegraph him and learn the trouble. (*Sits at the table and opens a book of telegraph blanks. Unconsciously knocks the duster, which JERRY left on the table, into scrap basket right of table. Enter JERRY, C., with telegram.* HOPPER, *eagerly*.) Well, what is it? A telegram?

THE RECKONING

JERRY. Yes, sir.

HOPPER. Give it to me, quick!

(Snatches telegram from JERRY and tears it open.)

JERRY *(aside)*. I wonder where I put that duster?

HOPPER *(is about to read telegram, but notices JERRY)*.

Well! What are you standing there for?

JERRY. I—I was wonderin' if —— *(Hesitates.)* Is there an answer, sir?

HOPPER *(angrily)*. No, you idiot.

JERRY *(scared)*. Y-yes, sir. *(Aside.)* He's crazy, sure.

(Exit, c.)

HOPPER *(reading telegram and starting—with emotion)*.

What! Smith & Co. refuse to extend the notes! *(Tears the telegram into pieces. Intensely.)* It will ruin me! By heaven, it will ruin me! I aimed so high; I have struggled so hard for power and now—now when success is almost within my grasp, it has burst like a bubble. I shall be laughed at. My acquaintances will shun me. Boys will point after me in the street. *(Vehemently.)* Never! Never! *(Opens the table drawer—hesitates; then closes the drawer.)* Were I but sure that there is nothing after death. I have tried to believe so all my life, but now —— Bah! I am a coward. *(Opens the table drawer and takes out a revolver.)* Why should I hesitate? *(Takes a box of cartridges from the table drawer and loads the revolver.)* One should be sufficient; but two will make sure. I wish I could put the first shot into the brain of the woman who has brought me to this. I have risked everything for her sake. Fool that she has made me! I thought that by acquiring great wealth I could compel her to love me, but she—curse her!—she spurned me as though I had been a dog. To-morrow—where will I be to-morrow? My failure will be discussed in the exchange and on the street corners. “Nicholas Hopper has failed.” Failed! No: by heaven! not while there remains the slightest chance of saving myself. I shall fight until every hope is gone, and then—*(pointing to the revolver)* this will end all.

THE RECKONING

(Puts the revolver in the table drawer.) But what is to be done? If I could pay Smith & Co. part of my indebtedness, no doubt they would give me a couple of months to raise the balance. *(Sits at table L. C.)* Forty thousand dollars would settle two of the smaller notes. Forty thousand dollars! *(Leans his head thoughtfully upon his hand. Suddenly appears to be struck with an idea, and springs to his feet.)* Ah! Margaret's money! Why haven't I thought of it before? But—but I have no right to touch that. Why not? It is lying idle, locked up in the Depositors' National Bank. She would not object. I will borrow it—yes, and pay her interest. It is the only thing that can save me. If I could use it—I shall! Luckily it is still entered in my name. *(Searches for check book.)* I'll draw a check and take it to town by the next train. Where is the book? *(Opens the table drawer and searches.)* Perhaps it is in my room. *(Goes R.)* I'll win the fight yet, and even should I chance to lose, I have a medicine which will cure all my ills.

(Exit, R.)

(Enter JERRY, C. Cautiously.)

JERRY. He's not here—thank goodness! I wonder where that duster is? I was sure I dropped it on the table. *(As if struck with a sudden idea.)* Gee Willikens! Perhaps the gov'nor found it. I—I'd be afeared to ask him—he'd make me swallow it. If only I knew where he put it. Maybe—maybe it's in the table drawer; but no, that ain't likely. You can't tell what a crazy man would do with a duster, though. I—I've got half a mind to look. *(Looks out doors R. and L.)* Yes, I'll do it. *(Tiptoes to table—stealthily opens the drawer. Sees the revolver and springs back, frightened.)* A—a—a—gun! as sure as shootin'! A genuine gun! *(Carefully takes up revolver.)* Loaded up to the muzzle, too. *(Examines it.)* No, there's only a couple o' shots in her. I reckon he guessed he'd wing me with one an' finish me with t'other. But he'll have to guess again. *(Draws out cartridges and pockets them.)* I ain't a-goin' to let him do nothin'; he'd be sorry for it. *(Puts the revolver in drawer.)*

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Hullo, a box of cartridges. I'll gobble them. (*Puts box in pocket.*) There. He can shoot all he's a mind to, now. It won't hurt nobody. Well, dog me cats, if there ain't my duster in the scrap basket.

(*Stoops and takes the duster out of the basket. Enter HOPPER R., with check book.*)

HOPPER (*sharply*). What are you doing there, you rascal?

JERRY (*frightened*). N-nothin', sir. (*HOPPER walks rapidly toward table L. C.*) By Jingo! He's after the gun. (*Makes a dash toward C.*)

(*Enter MCLAIN and MARGARET, C. JERRY runs into MCLAIN.*)

(*Exit JERRY, C.*)

MARGARET. Father.

HOPPER (*turning—sharply*). Well? What now?

MCLAIN. Good-morning, Mr. Hopper.

MARGARET. Father, Dr. McLain has come to—we thought that—that you might wish to—to see him——

HOPPER. Eh!

MCLAIN. Mr. Hopper, I'm told you have had several severe headaches lately——

HOPPER (*sneeringly*). Oh, they've told you that, have they?

MCLAIN. Your sister and daughter sent for me, hoping that I might be able to persuade you to undergo a treatment——

HOPPER. Indeed! Very kind in them, I'm sure.

MCLAIN. You know, Mr. Hopper, that when the blood is driven to the head in moments of excitement——

HOPPER (*interrupting*). There is danger of a vessel bursting. I have heard all that before.

MCLAIN. You do not seem to realize what the consequences might be.

HOPPER. Yes, I do. Death.

MARGARET. Oh, father!

MCLAIN. If you wish the truth, Mr. Hopper——

HOPPER (*interrupting—angrily*). Do you think I wish a lie? You come here and attempt to frighten me with

THE RECKONING

your nonsense. You try to weaken the strength of my will, and the activity of my mind at a time when I need them the most.

MARGARET. Oh, father, control yourself.

HOPPER. You hope to bring me within your power by your lies, so that you can enjoy a living at my expense.

McLAIN. Mr. Hopper, sir!

HOPPER (*furiously*). But you will never receive another cent from me. Not one cent. You sneaking leech!

McLAIN. Sir!

HOPPER. Now, go! Go! Do you hear?

(*Points to door c.*)

McLAIN. I do. And I shall never enter this house again.

HOPPER. See that you don't.

(*Exit McLain, c.*)

MARGARET. Oh, father, father! (*Cries.*)

(*Exit, c.*)

(*Enter ARMSTEAD, c. HOPPER sits at table L. c. Without perceiving ARMSTEAD.*)

ARMSTEAD. Good-morning, Mr. Hopper.

HOPPER (*turning*). Oh, it's you. (*Eagerly.*) Well, what do your friends say? Have you the money?

ARMSTEAD. No.

HOPPER. Then what are you here for?

ARMSTEAD. To see you about another matter.

HOPPER. I have no time this morning. I am going to the city by the next train.

ARMSTEAD. The next train does not leave for an hour. The business is of great importance, both to you, and to —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). Be quick then. What is it?

ARMSTEAD. I made an appointment with—a—a resident of your town to meet me here this morning —

HOPPER. He has not come.

ARMSTEAD (*quietly*). He's in the next room.

HOPPER (*snappishly*). Who is he? What does he wish with me? Why don't you tell me your business in-

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stead of being so mysterious? What's the man's name?

ARMSTEAD. Robert Andrews.

HOPPER (*surprised*). Andrews!

ARMSTEAD. I understand he has been in your employ.

HOPPER. Well? What if he has?

ARMSTEAD. You employed him to search for Mrs. Henderson's daughter who ran away from home ten years ago.

HOPPER (*agitated*). It's false—and even if it were true, what business is it of yours?

ARMSTEAD. I will answer that later. You offered Andrews the house where Mrs. Henderson lived upon condition that he would search the premises and bring you any papers he —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). He lies! What would I wish with any of Mrs. Henderson's rubbish?

ARMSTEAD. Then you take no interest in the matter?

HOPPER. No. Why should I?

ARMSTEAD. I am sorry, for a paper has been found —

HOPPER (*interrupting—alarmed*). Found! W-what paper?

ARMSTEAD. A paper that will prove of considerable value to Mrs. Henderson's heirs. It is an agreement John Henderson made with —

HOPPER (*interrupting—agitated*). I—I never made such an agreement. It's a forgery! A scheme to extort money from me.

ARMSTEAD (*quietly*). The courts can decide that question. That this agreement is in existence upon paper, there is no doubt.

HOPPER. I do not believe it.

ARMSTEAD (*going to c., calls*). Andrews!

(*Enter ANDREWS, c.*)

ARMSTEAD. Andrews, Mr. Hopper is inclined to doubt that a paper was found in the house Mrs. Henderson used to occupy.

ANDREWS. I—I found the paper myself, sir.

HOPPER. His saying so proves nothing.

ARMSTEAD. I have the paper.

HOPPER. Bah!

ARMSTEAD. It bears your signature.

THE RECKONING

HOPPER. Eh? A forgery.

ARMSTEAD. And the signature of a witness who still lives.

HOPPER. What? A—another forgery.

ARMSTEAD (*quietly*). I also have another paper. (*Takes paper from his pocket.*) Here it is. This was found at Mrs. Henderson's the day of her death. (HOPPER utters an exclamation.) You tried to force her to sign away her right to royalties under that agreement, but she refused, and the handwriting on the paper bears witness against you. You must confess, Mr. Hopper—that —

HOPPER (*interrupting*). I confess nothing. This is a case of blackmail, nothing more. You hope to frighten me into purchasing these papers from you. Oh, you have made your plans very prettily. Well, how much do you want?

ARMSTEAD. Nothing. We have come to see you that justice is done to Mrs. Henderson's daughter.

HOPPER. Daughter! (*Laughs.*) Why, man, she's dead long ago.

ARMSTEAD. She is not only alive, but she is here in this house.

HOPPER (*greatly agitated*). It's a lie!

ARMSTEAD (*controlling himself*). Andrews, will you kindly call her?

HOPPER. Mrs. Henderson's daughter! What does this mean, sir?

(*Exit ANDREWS, c.*)

ARMSTEAD. Now, Mr. Hopper, you wish to know why I interest myself in what appears to be none of my business. I will tell you. It is because Mrs. Henderson's daughter is my friend, and I am her legal adviser. She is no stranger to you. You will recognize her as the lady upon whom you have forced your attentions.

HOPPER. What! Why, confound you, sir!

(*Threatens ARMSTEAD. Enter MRS. K., c.*)

ARMSTEAD. The woman you insulted in my house.

HOPPER (*perceiving MRS. K.*). Mrs. King!

THE RECKONING

ARMSTEAD. Yes, Mrs. King, and the daughter of the poor woman you so cruelly wronged. (*A pause.*)

MRS. K. I do not come here as the woman whom you professed to admire; nor as the woman whom I admit for a time permitted your attentions. No, I am heartily ashamed of that woman. I come—not as May King—but simply as Mrs. Henderson's daughter.

HOPPER (*excitedly*). So you—you have been deceiving me? You—for whom I have risked fortune and reputation. (*Furiously.*) Why—I—I could kill you.

(Goes toward MRS. K., L., threateningly.)

ARMSTEAD (*stepping between HOPPER and MRS. K.*). Control yourself, sir.

(Enter SKINNER, C., out of breath.)

HOPPER (*perceiving SKINNER—hurrying toward him*). What news? Why haven't you telegraphed? Quick! Why don't you answer?

SKINNER. Smith & Co. are unloading all their cotton on the market.

HOPPER. What! (*Staggers to table L. C. Supports himself.*) Let them! So shall I! But my notes?

SKINNER. But—but your notes are due to-day.

HOPPER (*excited*). Yes, yes. I know, I know. But I can meet them—two of them, and they will extend the others; I am sure they will. Here's a check—a check for fifty thousand dollars on the Depositors' National——

SKINNER. Eh? It is not worth a cent.

HOPPER. What! The bank hasn't—it hasn't——

(Hesitates.)

SKINNER. The Depositors' National has failed.

HOPPER. Failed!

SKINNER. Right.

HOPPER (*intensely*). Then I am ruined.

SKINNER. No doubt, no doubt.

HOPPER (*bursting into hysterical laughter*). Ha—ha—ha—ha—ruined! Ha—ha—ha—ruined! Not one cent I can call my own, ha—ha—ha—not one cent! (*Furiously, to MRS. K.*) You—you vixen.

THE RECKONING

ARMSTEAD (*sternly*). Mr. Hopper!

HOPPER (*to Mrs. K.*). You think to live to gloat over my ruin—but you shall not. (*Opens the table drawer and takes out revolver.*) You shall die! (*Aims revolver at Mrs. K. and pulls the trigger. Mrs. K. screams. HOPPER utters an exclamation and pulls the trigger again—then, wild with rage, he raises the revolver to hurl at her. ARMSTEAD and SKINNER spring upon him.*) Let me go! Let me go, I say. I'm no criminal. Let me go! I have never wronged a human being; I swear it. If I lie, then by heaven, may I never speak again! (*With a mighty effort he throws ARMSTEAD and SKINNER aside and again raises the revolver to hurl at Mrs. K.*) Oh! my head! (*Lets the revolver fall. Reels and is supported by SKINNER.*) My head! M-m-y-y —

(*Speaks incoherently and is supported by SKINNER and ARMSTEAD, L.*)

(*Exeunt SKINNER and HOPPER, L.*)

ARMSTEAD (*gravely*). It is a stroke of paralysis. Heaven has taken him at his word.

MRS. K. (*who has fallen on sofa down R.*). What a fearful judgment. And it's partly my fault. Yes, I have tempted him to be untrue to all his better instincts.

(*Sobs.*)

ARMSTEAD (*at her side*). No; you were but a little foolish. He was selfish and criminal. The fire of ambition burnt within him, and he fanned the flame into so fierce a blaze that it consumed him.

MRS. K. Oh, I—I cannot remain among my old acquaintances. I must go away.

(*Rises and crosses to L.*)

ARMSTEAD. Why should you?

MRS. K. I feel that I cannot live where I shall meet Margaret and her aunt.

ARMSTEAD. Yet they may need your assistance. You have wealth—why not devote a portion of it to employing the people of this village who are now so greatly

THE RECKONING

in need? I—I—your friends do not wish you to go away.

MRS. K. (*smiling sadly*). My friends? I fear I have but one. You have proven yourself a true friend, and if I could thank you —

ARMSTEAD (*crossing to her, smiling*). Why, I want no thanks. May, I believe I know you better than you know yourself. You've been trying to spoil a noble woman, and you can't. You can't. She will come out in spite of you.

MRS. K. You—you really believe in me, after all?

ARMSTEAD. Believe in you? I have always believed in the real you. Ah, May, "Something the heart must have to cherish, must love and joy and sorrow learn." We have both known the sorrow. Let us have the love and joy together. Shall we?

(*Holds out arms to her.*)

MRS. K. Yes—yes!

(*She goes to him, and he takes her in his arms.*)

CURTAIN

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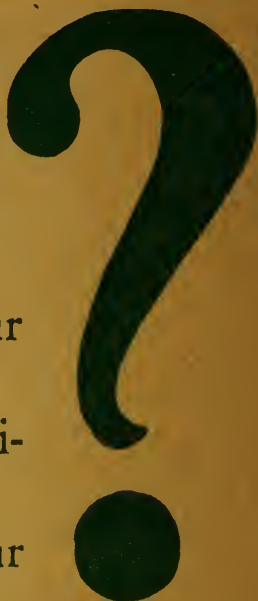
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