WHEN LOVE SPEAKS

by

WILL PAYNE

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"And when love speaks, the voice of all the gods
Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony."

—*Love's Labour's Lost.*

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LOAN STACK

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CHAPTER I

SAUGANAC, as doubtless every one knows, lies at the mouth of the river of that name, on the east shore of Lake Michigan, a day's ride by boat from Chicago. Stoves, lumber, and patent medicines are its best-known products, and it contains some seventy-five thousand souls. The town is built mainly around the foot of a long, wooded bluff that flanks the river; but the manufactories are mostly on the other, or north, side of the stream. From that bank at night the moons of the arc street-lamps and lighted windows of dwellings showing through the leafy screen of the wooded bluff make a pretty sight — to which head lamps of gliding trolley cars and ogre eyes of rushing automobiles up on Overlook Boulevard lend an attractively theatric touch.

The town looks prosperous. In the business section the streets are paved with brick; in the better residence districts, with asphalt, or macadamized. Along Overlook Boulevard are residences which, in various architectural modes, show that the fresh-

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water port has, in its half-century, produced its share of wealth and social selection. Down town, the First National Bank Building is eleven stories high, and has a marble rotunda with a gilded frieze.

Of course there is the other side. To the south of the bluff — especially near the shore, on Fish, Dock, and Lake streets — the view is rather dismal. Wooden block pavement, put in long ago with too scant foundations and too little of everything except graft, has gone to wreck. Along the ruined curb are mud-puddles in which broken pieces of the pavement forlornly float. The plank sidewalks sag.

Number 412 Lake Street was once a dwelling of some pretensions. It has a basement — long disused. A pair of stairs with an iron rail leads from the street up to a front door, once black, with an urn and a dropsical dove in each panel of frosted glass. A mansard roof forms the second story, and gives the appearance of an uncannily swollen head. Two square windows in this upper story look like eyes unpleasantly set in the midst of the bulging brow.

One warm September evening a light shone against the cracked green paper shade of the south window. In the bare sleeping room within a suit-case lay open on the bed. A well-made young woman was taking things out of the wobbly bureau and packing them in the suit-case with a decisive vigor which betrayed

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temper. She was handsome, but perhaps not just in the way a proper young lady would choose. Her large, dark eyes under nearly straight brows might have been called bold. There was a militant suggestion in the set of her fine shoulders.

Occupying the only chair in the room — a weak-backed willow rocker — Mr. Harris Doane watched her vigorous movements. He was her brother-in-law — unless his wife, during the last five years, had secured a divorce somewhere out West, which Doane disinterestedly considered probable. He was still a youngish man in appearance, strongly built, but rather fat. He wore a small mustache, jauntily twisted up at the ends. Puffy lids drooped over his brown and slightly bloodshot eyes. He made it a point to have everything about his apparel as expensive and genteel as possible. Even the heavy revolver in his hip pocket was pearl-handled, and cost eighteen dollars.

"You always was a fool, Fan," he observed.

"I was a fool to have anything to do with you," Fanny retorted. "I might have known it was a crooked game, or you wouldn't be in it." She lifted her handsome head angrily. "I did know it was a crooked game. I knew it at the start!"

"Well, what's got you sore on it then?" he asked.

She folded the shirt-waist and laid it in the suit-case without replying. She knew of old that he could not understand.

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Some four weeks before, being in quest of employment, she had unluckily encountered her resourceful relative and he had offered her a job. The generous lure of twenty-five dollars a week tempted her sorely. The job was conducting what Doane fancifully named The Golden Horn Assurance Reserve Investment Bond Corporation. She had nothing to do but send out what he called the "dope," and turn over to him, on his semi-weekly visits, the accumulated letters containing one-dollar bills. She knew it was a kind of fake, swindling policy game.

"The suckers are simply bound to lose their money anyhow," he now philosophized, in answer to her unspoken scruples. "You couldn't nail it to 'em with railroad spikes so's they'd keep it. It's real kindness to take it away from 'em with neatness and despatch. I been in a lot of these games first and last. First I used to set up nights and hire a lawyer to fix a scheme that'd look good. Gawd! I wish I had the money I've paid Wes Wogan for fixin' 'em up legal."

"Much good the money did that drunkard!" she commented.

"Wes Wogan's the best lawyer in Mission County if he'd cut out the booze," Doane replied. "But fixing up pretty schemes is no good. Any old scheme will do. The suckers simply got to lose their dough or they'd drop dead. You're a sucker yourself, Fan." He grinned humorously. "Gawd! I ought to sell you a Golden Horn bond!"

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"Maybe I'm a sucker," she replied darkly; "but you ain't as smart as you think you are. You'll wind up in jail if you don't clear out of here."

"Aw, come off!" he replied with some irritation. "What you getting back to that rot for? Suppose I could have run here a month if I hadn't seen the police? They've had their share good and plenty, I tell you."

"All the same, you ain't as smart as you think you are," she iterated stubbornly. "I suppose you have seen the police. But you grafters ain't going to have your own way much longer. There's men you can't buy."

He regarded her speculatively a moment. "I suppose you mean that duck Holmes, the reform prosecuting attorney. Why, he's the biggest sucker going. Gawd! I ought to sell him a bond!"

"You can't buy him, just the same!" she declared significantly.

Her oracular manner excited his curiosity. As she lifted some things out of the bureau drawer he studied her back thoughtfully, and found the clew he sought. "You've been up to see his wife! Little Kittie Donovan! So that's what's eating you!"

She looked over her shoulder, flushing angrily. "I have been to see Kittie! It's to her house I'm going in the morning. So there!"

Reflecting upon this new phase, he saw her take a well-worn jacket from the drawer, unfold it, and extract from the inner pocket an odd-looking envelope,

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of large letter-size, tied up with a faded red ribbon. The envelope appeared old, and he noticed, with a sort of professional interest, that she laid it on a corner of the bureau before walking over to the bed with an armful of wearing gear.

"It don't mean anything to you, Harris Doane," she said, "but I've been a square woman all my life."

"Gawd! I wish it run in the family!" he observed.

She ignored this delicate reference to her sister. "I've supported myself since I was twelve years old, and worked like a dog to do it, too. I never did anything crooked before. And if you know when you're well off, you'll clear out," she concluded somewhat inconsequentially.

"You don't mean you'll give me away?" he demanded.

Again she turned duskily red. "You're just a dog! You don't know what it is to be square!"

Her opinion of his character seemed not to interest him; but he ran his stout white fingers through his pompadour reflectively. "Clear out it is, then," he said coolly. "Get out the dope and we'll burn it."

"Do you mean it, Harris?" she cried with a note of pleasure.

"What else is there to do?" he answered rather sullenly. "Get out the dope."

Her eyes still showed pleasure. She went promptly to the wash-stand and lighted a half-burned candle. "I'll do it in two minutes," she

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said. He did not reply; but sat running his fingers through his pompadour. She went briskly downstairs.

The "dope" consisted of pamphlets and circular letters describing the advantages of the Golden Horn Assurance Reserve Bond Investment Corporation, and these comprised the only tangible assets of that concern. There was no need of bookkeeping. Whatever money came in Doane pocketed. Closing the dining-room doors, to prevent a light showing from the street, Fanny put an armload of the dope in the grate and applied her candle. Then a belated suspicion crossed her mind. She ran noiselessly upstairs and applied her eye to the crack of the half-open bedroom door.

Mr. Doane stood by the bureau. In one hand he held a large letter-size envelope, curiously old-looking, a piece of faded red ribbon, and a small packet of sheathless letters. The other hand held one of the letters open, and he was reading it with much amusement. Fanny flew in.

"You dirty dog! You miserable sneak-thief!" she cried, and sought to seize the letters.

He had time to whip them behind his back, and, half-turning, obtrude a defensive shoulder to her assault. Her feminine fury simply heightened his amusement.

"Tell me whose they are, Fan, and I'll give them up," he said, gasping with merriment and fending as well as he could with his shoulder.

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She stopped her ineffectual clawing for the letters. "They're my mother's," she panted, her face aflame.

Doane could hardly contain himself. "I knew it!" he gasped. "The old girl's! Then they're from Fred Hasbrook! I remember about it! Haw! Haw!" Tears ran from his eyes. "The old girl and Freddy! 'Oh, my beloved!' And 'Her shining eyes!' Gawd! I always said the left one was glass! That's shiny enough!"

For all his well-nigh uncontrollable mirth he noticed that the flush on her face was succeeded by pallor; her eyes glittered; her lower lip protruded slightly; and she balled her right hand into a very efficient-looking fist. Instincts, born of many experiences, warned him that his position, with his hands behind his back, was a poor one strategetically, and that he was about to receive a punch on the nose propelled by all the vigor of an arm nearly as muscular as his own. He promptly produced the letters.

"Don't get excited, Fan," he said mollifyingly. "Gawd! You ain't got any sense of humor!" He wiped the tears from his eyes.

Her fingers trembled as she refolded the letter he had opened, replaced them all in the old envelope, and retied it with the red ribbon. For a very interesting moment Doane wondered whether she was going to notice the absence of the one which — mostly as a mere matter of professional pride — he

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had put up his sleeve while his hands were behind his back. Evidently she wasn't — which heightened his amusement as he followed her down-stairs.

They worked silently — Doane still with mirth-moistened eyes — conveying the dope to the grate. Then she straightened up abruptly, listening.

"There's somebody at the back door," she said under her breath.

He followed her as she stole to the dark kitchen, softly lifted a corner of the window shade, and peered out. Then she ran to the door and opened it.

Doane heard a mellow, low-pitched old voice saying: "Yes'm, Miss Fanny. It's from Miss Kittie, to be read right off sharp. She say, 'Don' wait a minute fer nothin'!'"

Naturally, when Fanny hurried to the lighted dining room, Doane followed. He saw her tear the square, cream-colored envelope, and snatch forth a note.

"It's a raid! The sheriff's coming!" She spoke it breathlessly, with wide, fear-stricken eyes.

"Rats!" said Doane, incredulously.

"It is! It is! See!" she held out the note, her eyes burning with excitement.

The note said: "Endicott will raid your place at eight. Don't wait a minute." It was signed with the letter K.

"Quick! It's almost that! I'll get my suit-case!" she gasped, and ran headlong for the stairs.

A minute later when she came flying down, her

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suit-case in one hand, her hat in the other, the flames were dancing merrily over the last of the dope.

"Follow me," said Doane, businesslike.

"Harris! Give me Kittie's note!" she said.

"I chucked it in the fire," he answered, and slipped into the kitchen.

As she followed him she knew he was lying, and wished to say more; but her heart was pounding at the base of her throat; there was a rushing in her head. She felt, rather than saw, that he took the revolver from his hip pocket; and she had a sort of sickening sense of him as a big, bloody cat, as he stepped softly to the curtain and peered out. She heard his tense whisper, "Here's a man; run like hell!"

He flung the door open, leapt, and hammered furiously with the butt of his revolver. She knew he was upon the man; vaguely heard the impact of the blows; and ran with all her might. She half tumbled down the back stairs; staggered on, gaining her feet; and raced blindly up the alley, clutching her suit-case.

Some three hours later she made her way out of a brushy wood upon a road. She had lost her hat in the tumble down the stairs; but still clutched the suit-case. Down below she saw the vague shining of the river in the dark. Something in her desperate mind had been driving her on toward it. She was weary, torn, bedraggled; and she presently paused a moment by the roadside to get her bearings.

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Dimly outlined against the sky above her were the tops of three giant pines. Then she made out the tall, iron fence. She stretched out her hand and touched it. In a moment she discerned the bulk of a house back among the trees.

She was in front of the Hasbrook place. She could not tell what the hot and deadly bitter emotion was that rushed over her. She crossed the road to the river side, swung her suit-case and hurled it far out, and heard it light in the underbrush near the foot of the bluff. Throwing away the suit-case was some way conclusive. She was not going to the river. So she sat down on the grassy roadside and wept, heart-brokenly. With that idea of the river driving her, she had felt a certain tragic dignity. Now she was utterly forlorn and abased; and her sore-wounded heart turned to Kittie.

She knew she oughtn't to do it. She had made Kittie trouble enough. But when that great, helpless ache came in one's breast, one must, some way, find a mother lap.

Two o'clock in the morning, cold, torn, bedraggled, half-dead with fatigue, she slipped in at the alley gate and sat down on a box by Kittie Holmes's back fence. When it began to lighten a little, so she could see the outlines of the house, she stole to the stable door, unlatched it, slipped in, and hid herself behind the stairs leading to the haymow — to wait for morning and whoever should discover her.

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CHAPTER II

THE strengthening daylight presently revealed the newness of Holmes's house. The mortar between the trim white stones of the foundation was quite fresh. It was a simple, comfortable, square frame structure with a wide veranda in front. Holmes had built it that summer for his bride. The lawn, uptorn in building, was still raw, its grass scant and patchy as a youth's beard. It stood on the corner of Orchard and Peach streets — that is, toward the southern slope of the plateau, on the opposite side from fashionable Overlook Boulevard.

The advancing sun shone strongest upon the southeast corner, and presently awoke Holmes's sister. She opened her eyes to the light, with her limbs still sensibly full of the drowsy luxury of sleep, and glanced about the room. She had arrived in Sauganac, after more than a year's absence, the afternoon before, so she had a certain idling delight in looking upon the strangeness of this clean, new room. Then her rousing brain took up its coil with a kind of shock. To-day, no doubt, she would see him. What would he demand of her? What would she answer? She put a white arm above her head and lay still, with wide-open blue eyes, thinking.

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Her brother Winthrop was in her thoughts, too; and in a moment she remembered something else.

At the dinner table her brother — always full of his office — had told her and Kittie that Sheriff Endicott was going to raid a swindling policy shop. He believed Mayor Griess's grafting city police had been in collusion with it, and hoped to capture some evidence to that effect. But the raid had been "tipped off"; some traitor in their camp had given warning of it. So the sharpers had time to burn their papers and escape — by a hair's breadth; incidentally half murdering Nesbit, one of the sheriff's deputies. All the deputies got, besides this broken head, was a woman's hat. The treachery in his camp had fairly daunted Winthrop. Louise remembered how gloomy he had looked, tramping about his study.

It had cost Winthrop something to take the office of prosecuting attorney for Mission County. In spite of the great powers with which the statutes invested it, the position had always been treated as a lesser spoil of politics — going to some promising youngster whom the bosses favored, and who took it as a young doctor takes free hospital work. The salary was only eighteen hundred dollars a year. But Winthrop gave practically his entire time to it and needed all his modest private means to make ends meet. They kept only Martha, the competent, grumpy maid-of-all-work, and old Jefferson, who had followed Kittie from her father's hotel as

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a dog follows its master, and now puttered around the grounds and stable. To Winthrop the office was a trust, a mission. Thinking of the miscreant who had betrayed his raid, Louise's blue eyes shone with indignation. Her fine straight nose and roundly modelled chin gave the outline of a classic profile. She wished the cowards would come out and fight like men. Then she looked at her watch and started up guiltily to find that she had, after all, overslept.

When she came downstairs, the family had already eaten its early breakfast, and Winthrop had left to hark on the chase after the policy-shop culprits. Martha was in a bad temper.

Afterward Louise could not tell just when or how it was that morning that the air of something extraordinary about the house obtruded itself upon her. Martha had been driven down cellar to unpack fruit-jars, whither she had gone sputtering protests against that intolerable interference with her forenoon's routine. The cocker spaniel pup had started barking and been suppressed. There was a voice in Winthrop's study, which was on the left of the wide hall that bisected the lower floor. Louise could hardly have told, at the moment, just why she walked over and opened the study door.

Kittie sat in there, holding a tray from which a breakfast had evidently been eaten. Beside her sat a strange young woman. As Louise entered, her sister-in-law looked up.

Mrs. Holmes's small person had the pretty plump-

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ness of a pigeon, and her loose morning wrapper showed the tender, round lines of her figure. Her skin was milky white along the base of her smooth neck, but tanned and somewhat freckled on her cheeks and over her little piquant nose. Her plump arms, bare to the elbows, and small, pretty hands, and the little white-slippered foot under the edge of her gown helped on the infantile suggestion. A big wave of reddish hair rolled back from her fair, square brow. Her eyes had the hue of her hair — reddish, or golden in a full light. She looked up at Louise undisturbed.

The strange young woman was handsome, but not exactly in the way a young woman should be. Her big, dark eyes were heavy now; her face pallid; her skirt torn and bedraggled. Her abundant hair was badly disordered — suggesting the loss of a hat. She had just drained the coffee cup which she still held in her hand, and at the moment Louise stepped in, she was looking at Kittie with a queer, wan little smile that suggested a grateful dog. She looked up at Miss Holmes with a dull start.

Louise was trying to shape her lips to murmur a conventional and stupid "Pardon me!" but Kittie's clear, sweet voice sounded, tranquilly, "You remember Fanny Trescott, don't you, Louise?" And to Fanny, "Louise Holmes, you know. My sister, now."

"Why, so she is your sister, now," said Fanny, with a faint glow of welcome on that account.

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Altogether it was cool and commonplace as an introduction at an afternoon tea. Louise had a sense of being in a ludicrous position, and stood by the door, undecided.

Then, as though she were continuing a tea-table topic, Fanny spoke to Kittie: "We'd got everything chucked in the grate before they came; and Doane saw one of 'em coming up to the back door. He jumped on him and cracked him over the head with the butt of his revolver, and I ran, and lost my hat. The last I saw of Doane he was hammering the man." She dropped back in the chair and her haggard lips twitched. "Doane knows about your sending the note. It's like that, Kitten — me winding up by getting you into trouble. If I'd been any good — if I'd had any sand, I'd gone into the river."

Kittie answered with a low, clear laugh: "What good would that have done anybody? I'd rather have you here full of coffee. We're going to pull it off." She laughed again, low. "They can't stop two unscrupulous women! I've sent for Davy, too."

Fanny slowly shook her head. "You're a soft little thing. Your mother was, too. But if it hadn't been for you two — honest, I guess God has you for soldiers to fight for women like me." Tears silently overflowed her dark eyes.

"You've got to fight some yourself, Fanny," Kittie replied cheerily. "We'll carry it through!"

"I meant — I meant — the river," said Fanny, not much above a whisper. "That would have been

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right. I made for it; but, Kittie — when I came out on the road, I was there in front of the Hasbrook place — the place looking at me like it was saying, 'The river for you,' — and I wouldn't — some way, I couldn't" — her voice trailed into silence.

"Of course not!" said Kittie, sharply. "What good would that have done? You've got to rest a little now —"

She broke off, listening. "There's the door-bell," she exclaimed with an eager touch. "It must be Davy. Will you go, Lou?"

Martha was still immured in the cellar; and with a perfect helplessness Louise found herself going down the hall and opening the front door.

The man who stood before it was dressed in a loose summer suit of black flannel, and held a Panama hat in his hand. He looked athletic. His lean and smooth-shaven face was tanned an even rich Indian red. His black hair, cut rather close over his round head, was slightly curly, and he had the large, dark gray eyes of his type of his race.

As he stepped in swiftly his eyes lighted up; a subtle glow came to his tanned face. He stood before her, bent his head a little toward her, and breathed her nickname — "Loie?" — with an odd, intent questioning. Even so, her nerves felt the tension of his nerves, as though he were about to leap and strike.

"In the study, David. They're waiting for you," she said.

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With one backward look he sped down the hall. She vaguely acknowledged something physically superb in the way he went through the door — with a glide as light and swift as a cat's; his head up, his shoulders square. Almost her only thought at the instant was, "Why, he's fit and hard as nails!"

And this was the way they met after nearly two years.

She stood at the open door. It was perfectly clear now that Kittie had given warning of her husband's raid; that the woman in there was one of the policy-shop culprits for whom Winthrop was searching; that she herself was standing guard at her brother's door — against her brother!

In a way that was half ridiculous and wholly intolerable she felt herself caught in the toils of the plot. Then she summoned up her ample will, threw off the coil bodily, and marched upstairs to her room. After a while she heard sounds which told her that Kittie had brought Fanny upstairs and was having her lie down. At luncheon she pleaded a headache and had Martha bring her a cup of tea. She did not wish to meet her sister-in-law. From her window, in the afternoon, she saw David drive up in a cab. He entered the house and presently came out with Fanny, and the two drove away together. About four o'clock David returned alone.

Louise roused. She must get outdoors; have air and motion. She dressed for the street and went down. Stepping out on the veranda, she saw David

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lounging there most tranquilly, and smoking a cigar. Instantly her purpose changed. She would not be afraid! She lifted her pretty chin and marched up to him.

"What has happened?" she demanded.

"Why, it's all over," he replied. There was still an anxious questioning in his eyes, and he evidently wished to mollify her. "Fanny is headed for her job in the sanitarium. Doane is on the way to Chicago. There'll be no more trouble."

She sat down deliberately, her blue eyes looking squarely into his with a meaning which the little rosy flush upon her cheeks emphasized. Her parasol lay across her knees, and the winged hat she wore helped on the suggestive likeness to certain armed statues. "David, tell me exactly what you have done this afternoon." She spoke quietly, and even that made him know that, in a way, she sat in judgment.

He resumed his seat obediently, and studied the crown of his hat a moment. "Exactly what I've done, Lou?" he said rather low. "Well, first, I telephoned for Mitchell and Kennedy. They're the plain-clothes men — the detectives at police headquarters. Of course, Doane would have been paying graft to somebody, and Mitchell and Kennedy would naturally be the ones who had been taking it of him. So they'd be most likely to know where to find him. We located him without much trouble. He gave up Kittie's note at once. He'll never open his head to bother her."

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"Why are you so sure about that?" she asked.

Studying his hat-crown a moment, he did not answer. Then he said, simply, "I suppose he knows me."

"You mean it's because he's afraid of you," she said uncompromisingly, "afraid you'll thrash him." She plainly meant it scornfully, although she did not exactly know what set her on to badger him.

He looked up then, and a singular shock went through her as she met his eyes. He spoke under his breath, slowly. "Kittie is a blessed little soldier, fighting all she knows to save that woman. Would I let a blackguard like Doane — it's not a bad thing, Lou, that she's got a wolf for a brother."

"But what about Winthrop? Suppose I find it necessary to tell him what has happened?" The passion in his eyes seemed some way to try to beat her down, and she asserted herself boldly against it.

He stared at her an instant. Then his lips bent in a small, peculiar smile, and he slowly shook his head. "Not you, Loie! I might have believed it if I hadn't seen you again, but now that I've seen you I know better. For you're just the same — just the same girl!"

She felt her defences tremble. "Not just the same, David!" It was half a plea. "No; not the same." She arose hastily.

"Let me go, too, Lou." He stood up.

"No, I wish to be alone," she said quickly; and added, with a swift glance as she raised the sunshade, "Not now, Davy."

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CHAPTER III

LOUISE chose Orchard Street for her walk — simply because it was handiest and shady. She had begun very badly — not at all as she had meant.

In a way she had known David Donovan all her life although he was four years older. As a grammar schoolgirl she had had a consciousness of him which was rather different from her consciousness of any other boy. He was even then a person talked about — a kind of celebrity for his excellence in school athletics and for certain exploits over which sober elders shook their heads. It was precisely a part of her peculiar consciousness of him that she knew he was a boy who should not be approved. Sauganac was democratic enough; yet even then she was aware that as Dr. Holmes's daughter she was committed to a sphere that the son of the genial, uneducated hotel-keeper was rather outside of. On the other hand, David was already a personage with abundant attentions from the romantic sex. He was in the high school, which of itself placed him in a caste above all grammar schoolgirls. Yet he, in a way, distinguished her — that is, he always spoke to her good-naturedly; once in a while walked beside her; in short, evidently felt friendly to her.

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One day, when her dresses came no lower than her shoe tops, she had stood by while he robbed Mr. Epperson's orchard and brought her a hatful of the fruit. She knew it was said he was not always nice to girls; yet, whenever, in his Jovian good-humor, he noticed her, it was always to be nice to her.

After the high school he went to the state university at Ann Arbor, where his prowess at foot-ball soon made him as much of a personage as he had been at home. She went to the seminary at Mount Honor. During the year he sent her a Michigan banner to tack up in her room. It was only in the vacation after his junior year that they again saw much of each other. Then he paid her a good deal of attention, and when they returned to their schools, they corresponded — rather spasmodically on his part.

She went to Ann Arbor to see that year's great foot-ball game on Thanksgiving Day. When he broke through the line and made the winning touchdown, she did not shriek with other frantic thousands in the grand stand; but her insanity really exceeded theirs. That evening, behind some potted palms, he kissed her.

She was then seventeen and he twenty-one. Both her parents were dead, and there was nobody in particular to tell. After that they corresponded as secretly betrothed lovers.

David began life in the power-house of the street railway about the time she went to Wellesley. The

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vacations of her first, second, and third year she spent in Sauganac, and they were together much, still as secretly betrothed.

Perhaps that kind of impassioned championship of her slow, sure brother Winthrop, which had always been a part of her life, now gave a certain bent to her mind. At any rate, for a pretty girl, she interested herself a good deal in the larger political problems which so much absorbed him. She even looked into law with an idea that she might help him. She had never been slipshod. Far back she had not taken the view that David did of Dennis O'Neill, the shrewd, humorous, personally generous boss of Sauganac's grafting political machine. First and last she had had a good deal to say to David about Dennis O'Neill.

In her junior year she happened to see a Detroit newspaper which contained an item saying that David Donovan had been arrested for helping to steal some ballot-boxes. She wrote to Winthrop, who did not know her real interest in David. Winthrop wrote that 'twas undoubtedly true that David stole the ballot-boxes, in Dennis O'Neill's behalf; but they couldn't convict him. She wrote to David, then, and when she came home that summer, she talked to him with tears in her eyes. He had been contrite enough. In her senior year Winthrop came down to see her. Among other things he told her of an action in which he was interested. He had some evidence that the distillers at Nogiac had put

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bribe money in David Donovan's hands; but David avoided the legal mesh and could not be brought to testify.

She did not write to David about that. She had not the heart. Neither did she break off the correspondence with him; but it was different after that.

Finishing her five-year course, she went abroad with the Penroses. The Penroses were the most important family of Sauganac. The fortune had its beginnings in a little foundry. Now the James A. Penrose Stove Works were the largest in the world, as they constantly reminded the public. There had been some very profitable deals in government timber lands — of which, as Louise understood it, the less said the better. Latterly there had been Wall Street and railroad operations, to say nothing of Mrs. Penrose's elaborate social campaigns. The family, in fact, had far outgrown Sauganac, and seldom came to the castle on Overlook Boulevard. Miss Holmes did not know exactly why Mrs. Penrose was ever ready to take her up as much as she would permit. She permitted it fully enough after she left school. She did not wish to go back to Sauganac then.

After the year abroad, however, she wished to return — and take up her life anew at the age of twenty-three. Her position with regard to David had then seemed manageable enough. She knew that he had got to be superintendent of the street

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railway — probably was pretty much immersed in money-making and inclining to grow beefy.

Her walk had taken her up on Orchard Street to a neighborhood which at one stage of the city's growth had been a suburb where a few of the better sort of citizens had retired homes. Now it was largely built up with flats, or with dwellings, all about alike, which contractors had put up to sell on the instalment plan.

Louise paused before a place which still, forlornly, kept a flavor of the simpler time. The grounds comprised less than a quarter of the block — out of the original fifteen acres — and were now unkempt. Grass grew rank and half choked the old rose-bushes. Three gnarled old apple trees by the corner of the house were nearly dead. The house itself was merely an upright part with an L, having a narrow porch, ballustraded and ornamented with fretsaw work.

This had been her home, built by her father — a notable physician in his day. It was by the accident of the city's growth, making the fifteen acres of land valuable, rather than by any thrift in Dr. Holmes's management, that he had finally left his children a little competency. Probably, if he had lived longer, with his constitutional carelessness of money, he would have sold off the land and made ducks and drakes of the proceeds. Nevertheless, Dr. Holmes stood for something. In his sort he was the most thrifty of men. He might have made ducks and drakes of his land, but they would have been fowls

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of a big-hearted and ardent-headed breed. He had fairly dragooned his richest patients into founding the free hospital.

From time to time negotiations for the sale of this remnant of the old homestead had been under way. It was unproductive, and should be sold. Louise knew that; yet she looked across the rank lawn with a home-hungry pang. A certain tradition of fine and generous living attached to it, and this tradition some way enfolded her from David Donovan.

David's own traditions were different. More than once she had called him a red Indian. He met the world gayly, with a ready, practical, undelicate competence. He should belong more to Dennis O'Neill's sort than to hers. He was a man who would not always necessarily be nice to women. Thus he had had plenty of opportunities to betray himself, and so release her. He had first kissed her in a corner like a flirting shop-girl. He might have attempted the footing of a shop-girl flirtation, but he had not at all. He might have laughed at her scruples over the ballot-box exploit; but he had been humble and penitent over them. He might, latterly, have lightheartedly dropped her and taken up with somebody else; but he had not. Her red Indian was constant. He kept offering himself to her. Traditions were very well; but her heart could not get over this constancy.

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CHAPTER IV

THE veranda was empty when Louise returned to the house. She stepped inside, saw that her brother's study door was open, and went to it without waiting to take off her hat.

Kittie, in a soft, cream-colored dress, was standing by the end of the big desk, stooping a little, dimpled with laughter. "You are falling off, Johnny," she was saying, in her clear, sweet voice. "It's several days now since you've got any heads of large families on the strait and narrow path to jail. It'll never do! Why don't you go jump on the old apple woman at the corner?"

A masculine voice grumbled back, "I ought to have you and all your blarneying, soft-hearted family in jail!"

Louise blushed and dropped back from the open door as she perceived two stout hands reached out. She had been surprised enough when Winthrop wrote her that he was going to marry Kittie Donovan. The letter reached her in Rome while she was still aflame with the news that, leading his forces of reform, he had won the office of prosecuting attorney. She had reflected that Kittie, at any rate, was a sweet little thing. She had imagined her sitting

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dutifully at her husband's purposeful feet. But she had not been in the house overnight without awakening to the greater surprise that Winthrop, in fact, was at his wife's feet.

She heard Kittie laughing — evidently struggling against a pair of powerful arms. When she judged it was safe, she again stepped to the door. Winthrop saw her then.

"Ah, Loie!" he cried, his rather heavy face lighting.

The prosecuting attorney was then in his thirtieth year. He was of big mould, heavy-limbed, with hands and feet unusually large even for a man of his stature. He was bony, not fat. His head, too, was large, the brows projecting over his eyes, which were of a dark, mottled gray. He wore a close-clipped mustache. Honesty stamped him. His sister had been away so long and had returned so recently that her every appearance brought her newly home to him. As he drew her by the hand beside his chair and looked up at her, smiling, her woman's jealous heart could not but be satisfied on the great point that he loved her.

Kittie slipped an arm around her waist and cried, "Let's lock her up, Johnny! She might get away again!" Louise knew that Kittie, too, wished to love her. The little woman laughed. "Anyhow, we'll feed her well." With that, she went out and left them. An instant before Louise had wondered whether Kittie would leave them together — she possessing the guilty secret.

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"Busy, I suppose," Louise suggested, and sat down with a little smile for the litter on his opened desk.

She knew that Winthrop's mind was slow. It was only by hard grinding that he got through college and won his law degree. Now he toiled every evening in his study to finish work that a quicker man would have disposed of in office hours. She could imagine a sister being fond of a nimble, facile brother, but somehow it was only for this slow, sure old Winthrop, who never spared himself an ounce, that one could feel quite such an impassioned championship. His slowness seemed part of his great quality — the one, she thought, that really marked him for an important career — namely, that steel-bright, impenetrable integrity which encased him like a flawless armor.

"Oh, yes. There's plenty to do," he replied good-naturedly. "I'm hoping for a big stroke." She saw, from the way his mottled eyes shone, that it was something unusual.

"I can go on shutting up cheap gambling joints and raiding disorderly beer gardens," he said. "That's really what a good many of the people who backed my campaign mean by reform. They don't want any important business interests disturbed. The County Board won't give me an appropriation big enough to undertake anything really important. They've got to keep taxes down or they'll be unpopular. I've found out well enough that most of the rottenness in politics runs into business some-

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where or other. The worst of our rottenness here runs straight to those three rich distilleries at Nogiac. They're always bribing. They've had their own way so long that they think they own the government. They do own part of it. The attorney-general of the state is as much their man as though they paid his salary."

He folded his big hands together and smiled a little. "Maybe I have particular reasons for not liking them; but that doesn't affect their general hatefulness. Of course, they opposed me in my campaign, and they always fight with mud. Old Codley, who runs their crooked law and crooked politics, is a natural-born blackguard. He can't help it. They really own Julius Brown's *Daily News* here; and the *News* had some dirty little squib or other every day — for example, Epperson was treasurer of my campaign committee, and the *News* ran an article, pretending to be laudatory, saying that my father got up the formulas for Epperson's patent medicines. They wouldn't attack Epperson openly, because he's too rich and his medicine advertisements are too important. But Julius Brown got a disreputable lawyer, Wesley Wogan — you may remember him — to make some speeches about Epperson's cocaine and whiskey dope.

"Of course, that's mostly personal and ought not to count; but it shows the breed they are of. It's amazing how their influence ramifies, too. Tradger,

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you know, was elected coroner on the same ticket with me. I thought him an honest man. He'd been in office only a month when a girl was found dead on the beach near a bad beer garden. She was a pretty, light-headed young creature, the daughter of a laborer. I myself got evidence that young Schwartz of Nogiac had her in the garden. It wasn't very unlikely that she had been drugged. I supposed, of course, there would be an investigation, and was astonished to learn that Tradger had impanelled a jury in the evening, brought in a verdict of suicide, and had the body buried. Then I found that Codley had been down here and hushed the whole thing up. I don't know now what influence he used with Tradger; but it was sufficient. He evidently gave the girl's father some money, too, and got him out of town. So there was nothing to do—but jaw Tradger. He said, 'Oh, well, she's dead; what would be the good of stirring up a muss?' That dead girl, flung into her grave, is a pretty good symbol of what those Nogiac fellows are doing with our laws. Of course, there's plenty of bribery and loot, too."

Louise's color had heightened during the recital. Her eyes sparkled. "You're going to pitch into them?" she asked with a half-breathless eagerness.

"I can't do it myself, Loie," he replied. "I can't lay hold of the money or the time. It's a great big fight. It needs somebody with ability and money and courage. Fred Hasbrook is the man. I've

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been working at him for two months. I believe he'll take it up."

"Oh, Frederick! Really?" she cried, as though the news were too good to be true.

"He's coming home Labor Day. I'll see him again then. I believe he'll take it up. If he does — something important will follow. He's the man for it."

"Dear old Fred!" she murmured; and exclaimed, with animation, "Oh, he must! He shall!" She laughed. "I'll stick to him until he does. I'm needing a job, you know!"

It was, in a way, an intimate touch; and he bent his big body forward in the chair. "You're a job in yourself, Loie," he said. "Being fond of us and letting us be fond of you is enough of a success for anybody. We want you right here."

She noticed the plural pronoun, and smiled a little. "You don't need me now, Winthrop."

"More than ever!" he declared — "just because I'm happy. I am the happiest man in the world. I never in my life wanted anybody but Kittie. For a long while it didn't seem possible that she'd want me — but she did!"

He spoke with a kind of reverence. It was the only thing he had said about his marriage — and it was enough, for it laid bare to her his simple, steadfast heart. After that — whatever Roman instants she may have had, in which the possibility of a disclosure suggested itself to her indignant mind

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— she saw that she must, in a manner, be of the league against him.

She must keep the league's secret; but she could not content herself with doing simply that. Along in the evening, Winthrop being still busy in his study, she went boldly to her sister-in-law's room. The little woman had slipped on a loose gown, and whatever was soft and dear and babylike in her made its appeal. Louise sat down beside her.

"What are you going to do now, Kittie?" she asked, as one takes a child in hand.

"Nothing at all," Kittie replied, so quietly that it surprised the other. She clasped her pretty hands over her round knee and was evidently perfectly willing to talk about it.

"Fanny's sort of an inheritance from my mother," she began calmly. "Maybe you remember about her mother — Nellie Trescott, who used to keep a millinery store here, and went away, and her husband got a divorce, a long, long time ago. They said some rich man figured in it. There was an older daughter, who wasn't all that a young lady should be. Fanny came to the hotel one day when she was twelve, and wanted work. She'd run away from a pious aunt who'd taken her in. It seems the pious aunt couldn't forbear making moral reflections about Nellie and Jennie Trescott. Fanny was always a handsome girl. When she got a bit older and father put her in the dining room, a travelling man squeezed her hand and she broke a plate over his head.

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"I hear being a 'good' girl doesn't count any more, since Ibsen and others have come in; but from a youngster — maybe just because of her mother and sister — she had a kind of furious instinct to keep her womanhood clean. It's part of my job of being a woman to stand by her. She's always getting herself in a muss. She's a good deal of a cat, too. The only way she's ever known to protect herself was to spit and claw — and she's done it like fury. Maybe it's no credit to me, nowadays, that I've been a 'good' woman. But from away back — back in my mother's time — there's something that will always make me stand by Fanny, and fight for her if it's necessary. Probably I'm something of a cat myself at bottom. I suppose there's a sort of ragged edge for women — and for everybody. Because Fanny was poor and foolish and had dubious female relatives, she's had to sort of fight her way along the edge. Nobody but my mother and I know about that fight. If it looks to me as though somebody were saying of Fanny, 'She's pretty close to the edge, we'll just push her over,' I have to hop in and say, 'Now try whether you can push me over, too.' Perhaps I don't make it as clear as I might."

"Oh, yes! That part is clear, Kittie! I understand that! It's dear and brave and generous to wish to stand by that unlucky woman. But that doesn't answer the policy-shop question, does it?"

"To me it does, Lou," Kittie returned. "The

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gentleman that ran the policy shop married the older sister. It would be exactly like poor, blundering Fanny to fall in with his offer of a job. I knew she was there and had told her to quit it, and come here in the morning. Then I found out about the raid, and sent her warning."

"And that, Kittie — that leaves a lie between you and your husband!"

The little woman looked up with untroubled eyes. "There isn't any lie," she said calmly. "I couldn't have gone to Winthrop and asked him to let Fanny off, for that would have put a bad spot in his conscience. A bad spot in his conscience would make a small man of him. He must go exactly straight."

"That's true! You understand it! It's his great quality!" Louise exclaimed, surprised that Kittie did understand so well.

"And don't you see," the clear voice replied, "it would have been just as much against my conscience to let Fanny be sent to jail. If I had stood aside and not saved her, I would have been a smaller, meaner woman for it. I know what you mean, Lou — that husband and wife should be one. But after you're married yourself I think you'll change your mind. You give yourself to the man, to love him and work for his house and bear his children. But there's something you don't give. I think you'll see that you ought not to give it — that you'd be cheap if you did. Something that's your very self — call it your soul or what you please. 'Thy ways

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shall be my ways and thy people my people' — that's all right. But not 'Thy gods shall be my gods.' I can't do that. It would take away all I'm really good for. Probably my gods aren't any too good citizens; but they laugh and are tender-hearted. What would I do with Winthrop's rocky New England gods? They'd say in a minute, 'What's that lying little Irishwoman doing here? Put her out!' Don't you think I'll love my husband better and be more worthy of him because I saved that woman? He'll not know; but what lie is there if I can say to myself, 'I, too, have done something; I've saved Fanny.' Whatever good there is in that goes to him and his children."

Louise perceived that these gods were heathen. She perceived also — and this was most surprising — that the little woman followed them with open, intelligent, steady eyes. She had something of a proselytizing zeal — for the blindly erring. This evidently was not a case for it.

"Of course, you must be the judge, Kittie," she said.

Something else lingered in her mind — that odd thing Fanny had said about finding herself in front of the Hasbrook place. What had that to do with Fanny? She was tempted to ask Kittie; but it savored of the vulgarity of scandalous gossip, and she forebore.

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CHAPTER V

THE formal celebration of Labor Day began with a parade, which Louise chose to watch from a street corner. She thought it good for her democracy to stand on the flagging with the common crowd. Banners and flags were displayed along Broadway. The windows were peopled. Here and there a group of facetious youths with megaphones hung from the upper stories and favored the crowd with comments on the marchers. By the time the marching column wound past Louise's corner it was rather straggling and sore-footed. There was an imperfect understanding between the nervous, red-sashed marshals and their mounts — mostly delivery-wagon horses, impressed for the day. Nevertheless the spectacle was not insignificant. Broadway, with its high buildings and smart shops, displayed the little city's pride. These three thousand wage-earners, silently trudging behind the banners of their unions, upholding socialistic mottoes, had their impressiveness for such a mind as Miss Holmes's.

The speech-making was to be at the front of the Sauganac House — one of the town's famous institutions. The hotel, a long, three-story brick structure with iron balconies, stood in a parked

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square off Broadway — just where the street bent nearest to the lake shore. This square had once been a public park. When the old Sauganac House burned — some fifteen years before, — Dennis O'Neill's amiable henchmen in the City Council had generously presented Landlord Donovan with a ninety-nine year lease of the park, practically rent free. The hotel proprietor and Dennis were fast friends. There was no graft. It was simply a piece of open-handed liberality from Dennis to his friend — at the city's expense. Such was the father of David and of Kittie.

Louise was in no hurry to reach the hotel. She always smelled Dennis's lease there. She waited for the last straggler of the parade to pass; then walked slowly. When she reached the pleasant little park, she found the crowd in possession. The rows of chairs and benches fronting the hotel had long since been taken. People sat thickly on the grass at the rear. The balcony over the front door, from which the speeches were to be delivered, was already pretty well filled with notables. The band was vigorously performing a final air. She thought it not practicable to enter the hotel from the front, yet wished to hear Winthrop's speech. She skirted the block, therefore, and approached the hotel on the rear, or water, side. Here a cinder footway ran under the veranda which looked out upon the harbor. Walking along this, she smelled a reek of liquor and heard a clamor of voices. A swinging screen door

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opened and several men came out noisily directly before her. The foremost of them, in a dirty "Prince Albert" coat and soiled linen, held a half-empty beer glass. He evidently knew her, and for a second, while she halted, startled, his glance fell level into hers — drunken, insolent, malicious. She colored, stepped quickly aside, and passed the bar-room group. For a little time the shock of the encounter lingered in her nerves. She knew who the man was — Wesley Wogan, once a brilliant lawyer, now gone to the dogs. She wondered why he seemed to hate her. Also, she reminded herself that she had seen the back door of Landlord Donovan's prosperity.

Staff and guests of the hotel seemed taken up with the speech-making. The office was empty. Louise went to the second story and looked about uncertainly. A broad cross-hall gave to the balcony; but the three windows were already full of people, looking out. There were doors to the right and left, one or both of which should admit her to a public parlor. The door to the left was closed; that to the right ajar. She entered. It was a parlor, furnished with a good deal of plush and gilt, after the manner of an inland first-class hotel. Eight or ten persons stood or sat at the two windows which looked upon the balcony. Louise identified them at a glance. Stocky, grizzled Dennis O'Neill stood by the nearest window. Beside him sat his plain, gray, motherly wife. The other chair was occupied by a woman about whom nothing seemed genuine

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except her fat and wrinkles. Her hair was plainly dyed to that auburn hue, and supplemented by an ornate false front. She wore a much-befurbelowed white gown and huge hat, and had diamonds in her ears. This was Mrs. Julius Brown, wife of the editor of the *Sauganac Daily News*. She had had an inconspicuous career on the stage long ago, and gave herself many liberties in virtue of it. The editor himself stood at the side of the window opposite Dennis O'Neill — a large, loose man of forty, with a long red neck made more noticeable by a wide, turn-down collar. He was saying, "I always like to hear Bascom speak; he's so sure to make an ass of himself."

Louise perceived that she had blundered into a camp of the enemy — probably Editor Brown's suite. She would have slipped out; but Landlord Donovan saw her, and hastened over. He had grown somewhat stout in later years. His hair and mustache were quite gray. Still he presented the handsome, gallant figure of a man. His smile, as he held out his hand, was almost boyishly frank and genial. Louise herself felt that one might as well talk to a merry urchin about transubstantiation as to this handsome, gray-headed, warm-hearted, open-handed man about civic morality. She even gave him a little laugh for the joke of her having blundered in there, and let him conduct her to a chair at the window. The talk proceeded without regard to her near, but detached, figure.

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"Bascom can't forgive me, though, because I call him our leading philanthropist and usurer," said Julius Brown.

"Julius always thinks of the most disagreeable thing to say," Mrs. Brown observed, as though it were rather a merit in him. "I think it's got to be automatic with him. Only yesterday we noticed a new millinery store, and I said something about it, and Julius says, 'I wonder whatever became of Nellie Trescott's younger daughter.' You see, I mentioned millinery and Julius immediately thought of Nellie Trescott — the most disagreeable thing connected with it."

"Well, speaking of Nellie Trescott," said the editor, "I see Fred Hasbrook got home to-day. I don't know as Fred is the most disagreeable thing connected with Nellie; but he's the most conspicuous." The editor was much pleased with his wit. His cackling voice rose higher. "Maybe Fred's going to open the new millinery store himself and see if he can't get back some of the money he sunk in the trade when Nellie was around."

Louise, from the moment of taking the chair, had looked steadily out of the window. She hoped, angrily, that her face was not turning red. Her mental attitude toward this scandalous gossip was that of a person removing a dirty rag with a long pair of tongs. She thought, some way, that Dennis O'Neill signalled to Julius. At any rate the subject changed. "Here's Goliath," said the editor, as a patter of applause sounded without.

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Mr. Bascom, who called himself a lawyer and made a comfortable living as fire insurance agent and shaver of notes, and who had his finger in every pie by virtue of an irrepressible determination to put it there, had arisen in perspiring, podgy, and windy dignity. His introductory speech was the merest assinine verbosity. He was presently roaring out of his purple face, "And so I introduce to you that sturdy woodman — member of the woodman's union, — whose bright axe of reform is clearing away the jungle of graft — honest Winthrop Holmes!"

The applause was perfunctory. Somebody at the back of the crowd yelled "Rats!" and hooted derisively. Even amiable Landlord Donovan laughed.

The prosecuting attorney arose, and Louise saw at once that the foolish introduction had not in the least disconcerted him. He went straight at his speech as though there had been no preface.

He had no oratorical graces. The speech was a simple, solid, unadorned argument for the supremacy of the law. Before he had been up five minutes Louise felt, with a sinking heart, that with this audience it would quite fail. In Sauganac, he said, there were seventy-five thousand people; in Mission County, a hundred and fifty thousand. In the last county election the issue was very clearly defined. He had been elected prosecuting attorney and Endicott had been elected sheriff on the unmistakable understanding that they should, with strict impartiality, enforce the law. It was a great thing, he

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thought, that a governing majority of all these people should deliberately elect to live strictly by the law. It had been represented to him by very well-meaning persons — sometimes on the side of capital, sometimes on the side of labor — that he ought not to do certain things by way of enforcing the statutes because those things would be unpopular and even against the best interests of the people themselves. He could only reply that the mandate he had received from the people was, 'Enforce the law!' He would obey it strictly. If, when the next election came around, a majority of the people decided that they wished to live under a different dispensation, he would have nothing to say.

"Many people of Sauganac," he went on, "are ambitious to have the State Fair held here next month, because it will advertise the town and bring trade. I am told that the only way in which the heavy expenses of the Fair can be met is to permit book-makers, who will pay a great many thousand dollars for the privilege, to run what they call foreign books — that is, take bets on horse-races all over the country, which is clearly against the law; and to let down the bars for saloons, which will subscribe liberally if they are permitted to run all night, and so on. I am told rival towns will offer these concessions and Sauganac will lose the Fair unless she does the same. If that is true, Sauganac must lose the Fair. There will be no letting down of the bars. I stand here to enforce the law, as the people

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told me to do. So I shall stand while I hold the office of prosecuting attorney."

Louise caught her breath as he sat down, plumply. It had the effect, simply, of a challenge. Her nerves were quick to gather the disturbed, hostile air of the balcony. A single hiss would have started a demonstration. Directly in front of her window sat a hollow-eyed old man, with a tall, narrow head covered with a mat of white hair, and a slim white beard that fell halfway to his waist. This was Epperson, the patent-medicine millionaire who had been treasurer of Winthrop's campaign committee. He pawed his beard with a bony hand and turned to look balefully at his companion, Banker Titus. It was evident that the patent-medicine man was furious.

But a crucial moment passed without a hiss; and then a solitary voice, out among the workmen, called, "That's the stuff, all the same!" It broke the tension. Some laughed. Others amiably applauded a little.

Bascom bobbed up for another windy introduction. Louise heard Dennis say, "This is the Senator," and she bent forward with an impatient motion. A lean, old man arose, to general applause, and stood bowing urbanely. Louise clapped vigorously; the color deepened in her cheeks; a sudden passion of pride and love suffused her heavy heart.

Miles Hasbrook was now in his seventy-third year. He had been lieutenant-governor, then governor of the state during the Civil War, and had stamped

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his name in the record of those times. He had served a term in Congress; then, for twenty years, had represented the state in the upper house at Washington. The year before he had declined a nomination for vice-president. The relationship between himself and Louise's mother was really distant; but she had always called him "Uncle Miles." The Hasbrook place had always been a sort of second home to her.

The Senator, as he was still invariably called, although he had been in retirement three years, was quite round-shouldered and his white hair had grown thin without leaving him bald. He had a big, arched nose that looked exaggeratedly large in the midst of his long, thin, smooth-shaven face. His eyes oddly sparkled with vigor under their bristling, whitish thatches; and he spoke in the mellow, flowing voice that reaches over the largest crowd and holds it, insensibly charming even dull ears with its music. The words came without the slightest effort. He moved in the narrow space left to him with a disarming, leisurely naturalness, and with scarcely a gesture — with an effect of candid, good-humored reasoning as though he were in his study with some friends.

Louise appreciated the ripe art of it to her fingertips. She saw the veteran, the champion who had borne a weighty rôle in a hundred great verbal battles, to whom the government had more than once intrusted its cause in a crisis. She had a delight which was sensuous as well as intellectual in the play of his

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practised sword. She understood, in a moment, that he was taking up Winthrop's theme without seeming to do it, and, with that disarming ease, was weaving it full of allusions to the great, ever standing values that move men's hearts. He stepped behind the small desk, his lean old hands resting upon it, and let his voice ring bell-like in a terse peroration. And the fire caught. Cheer after cheer went up — fervid, impassioned, as happens when an orator strikes deep and satisfies the dumb aspiration of a crowd.

Louise's throat was full and throbbing. She felt her eyelashes suddenly wet. She saw that the old master had set Winthrop's blunt cause of the truth before these men in its proper royal garments, and that their hearts acknowledged it. She split her gloves applauding; and she heard Dennis O'Neill saying, soberly, "All the same, every mother's son of 'em can go to school to the old man still!"

The speech-making was over, the crowd breaking up. Louise vaguely heard Mrs. Julius saying something more about Fred and the milliner; but it scarcely impressed her mind.

She went into the broad cross-hall, hoping to meet the Senator. Instead, Winthrop found her.

"Fred Hasbrook got home to-day," he said. "I've seen him. He's going to take up the fight!" His eyes shone eagerly. She saw that he cared little or nothing about the failure of his own speech; but was happy over the victory of getting Frederick on his side. That was like him!

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CHAPTER VI

THE Hasbrook place was two miles beyond the city limits, fronting a macadamized extension of the boulevard that ran along the brow of the bluff. The river curved there, so the spacious, well-kept grounds overlooked the pleasant valley, some glimpses of the town about the river's mouth, and the blue bosom of the lake beyond.

It was a comfortable old house of no architectural pretensions — a main part with a wing on each side, all two stories high, of brick, now painted a dull yellow. A wide veranda, only a foot above the ground, ran along the front.

The weather was still genial, inviting one out-of-doors; but the leaves were turning, enriching the panorama of the valley with prodigal colors. Before Louise turned in at the arched iron gateway she saw two men lounging on the veranda. One of them, the Senator, saw her and waved his hand. The other sat up, turning his head; and when she was halfway across the ample lawn, he arose and came leisurely to meet her. This was the Senator's son.

Frederick was then forty-five, as tall as his father, but of an ampler, fleshier, looser build. Like the Senator, he had the nose of power; but with him it

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was meatier, more bulbous, and of a rather mottled, coppery hue which betoken out-of-doors and good living. He was almost completely bald, and the big dome of his head was a kind of distinction in itself. He moved in a loose-jointed way that suggested bodily strength and indolence.

Approaching him, Louise's eyes shone, her cheeks turned rosy. She held out both hands, stretched up on tiptoe, and kissed him. He drew her hand through his arm, and they walked up to the veranda. He seated her beside the Senator and stood over her, his hands on his hips, smiling.

"Loie, it's fine to see you here!" he declared; and, as he doubled his large body to a lounging attitude in the chair he had left, he added, "It interests me already to think what trouble you are going to get into."

"No trouble for me!" she replied gayly. "Uncle Miles and I have talked it over and settled that!"

She was happy. These two men belonged to the finest part of her life. As far back as she could remember she had run about the old place as another home.

The Senator chuckled. "I can't have trouble myself. It doesn't care for me. I'm too old. Fred is looking for some, though."

"Yes," she said eagerly. "Winthrop told me. You're going to pitch into the distillers."

"Pitching in's the word," he answered. "I find Winthrop's insanity catching. I'm in need of a job,

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and I might do worse — although father hardly thinks so."

She turned her head, with a questioning astonishment, to look at the Senator.

"It's only that I doubt you will succeed," said the Senator, good-naturedly. "I don't question the comprehensive deviltry of the distillers — heaven forbid! It strikes me that a suit in equity, brought by a private person, is a rather poor way of getting at them."

"But Winthrop says they own the attorney-general, so who but a private person can attack them?" she urged warmly. "Not to lie down and let them walk over everybody because they are rich and powerful, Uncle Miles! To fight them — fight them all you know! To strike at them always, everywhere, and never let up! Isn't that the way?"

Frederick tipped back his big head and laughed, mellow and deep. "There's the only spirit, father! There's the royal road to reform! That's the doctrine — the good, fiery little heart that wants to fight until it's knocked galley west and then come back and fight more! That's the only platform! We must roast the distillers to please Loie! We must soak 'em hip and thigh so her gentle breast may find peace!" He laughed again, with relish. "We ought to have her in the lists with us!"

"Will you?" She bent forward a little, smiling at his laughter, yet eager. "I know something about law, really. I put in spare time at it, thinking

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I could help Winthrop some. I can look up references as well as anybody. If you think I'm a joke, just give me a chance at loading muskets while you're on the firing line!"

As Frederick regarded her the laugh became only a faint twinkling in the depths of his eyes. In a way it was no joke. Here was the heart aglow; the generous, headlong enthusiasm — for a certain action in equity against three opulent distillers. He was still and ever would be to her the good old Cousin Fred that he had been from the times when she had come to him in trouble over rents in her frock and stockings. Once, in her fourteenth year, he had brought her home from Chicago across the lake. There was an accident in the night and a panic. He battered at her stateroom door, calling, "Come instantly, Loie!" She came as he commanded, a skirt and waist thrown mechanically over her arm, her hair in a long, thick braid, her feet and neck bare; greatly afraid, but quiet, obedient, trusting everything to him. The girlish figure, with wide, fear-stricken eyes, yet still, meek, yielding herself to whatever was demanded, detached itself from the ruck of crazily rushing forms and the babel of shrieks, and strangely stilled his own panic. From that time she had been rather different to him. The difference finally shaped itself in a dream of something that might have been. But he had never been different to her.

"Probably the muskets will not shoot the worse

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for your loading them," he said lightly. "She's quite right, father. The Nogiac gentlemen need plucking. They're overripe. Indeed, they're rotten. They've had their own way too long. Of course, your idea is the sensible one — to drive them out of politics by electing men they can't bribe and so on. But that means long time, and these wild Holmeses have got me all infected with their impatience. After all, somebody must start the ball rolling, raise a banner, lead an assault; and I'm ready for the job. I have reasons of my own for not liking them. That old blackguard Codley represents them in law and politics. If a man is a blackguard, why not say so? I got him pilled at the Country Club, and am very glad of it."

"I don't know but he should have been admitted," said the Senator. "Eminence merits recognition. Codley is the ablest blackguard I know."

"The fight will be all the more interesting on that account," Frederick returned. "I feel like pitching right in, as Loie says."

"Well, if the spirit really moves you, wade in, Fred," said the Senator. "I don't wish to rob another great historic character of his laurels; but I will emulate him by washing my hands of it. Of course, if it should turn out exceptionally well, I'll claim the credit." He chuckled again. He and his son were good friends. They stood together.

"I suppose I might have gone on being congressman," Frederick observed. He had served three

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terms in the lower house. "It's a pretty comfortable place to loaf. But I'm not built right for a jumping-jack. Flopping my arms and legs as the steering committee pulls the wires makes my joints sore. I'd rather flop here on the lawn. It is easier and counts for just as much. Newcomb is doing it bully in my place at Washington, and likes it. So I need a job. Shooting at the distillers will suit me first rate." He looked over at her, smiling. "The fight will be bitter enough to satisfy the most bloodthirsty young lady living."

He spoke lightly enough; but she knew this was literally true. It would be all in musty legal forms, with bill and cross-bill, demurrer and subpœna deuces-tecum. Had she seen a knight with sword and shield purposing to engage a dragon she would have advised him coldly to use cyanide of potassium. Before this bald-headed lawyer her eyes shone, her breast swelled, her blood quickened.

They heard footsteps on the gravel walk, and looked up, to see Dennis O'Neill and David Donovan crossing the lawn. Had the men noticed her then they would have seen the light go out of her face, and a little drooping, half sad, half bitter, touch the corners of her mouth.

Frederick arose to meet the callers, and took them into the house — from which it appeared that they had come by appointment. Louise talked on with the Senator awhile; went into the house with him; finally left him in the library.

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A large square hall divided the lower floor. Frederick had taken a front room in the right-hand wing for his office, where he attended to such legal and other business as he chose to occupy himself with. The library was in the left-hand wing at the rear, looking upon the garden and orchard. A door at the end led to what had been meant for a drawing-room — a long, rather narrow apartment with narrow windows that came down to the floor and opened upon the veranda. One wing of the door to the hall was usually open, as now; but the room was very little used. Only one of the six white blinds was thrown back, so the apartment was dim and cool, with an air of empty seclusion. It was here that Louise came from the library, and seated herself, half absently.

It was time to talk to David. Her will to courage and rectitude struggled confusedly with all the feelings that prompted her to postpone talking to him. She felt that she knew what she ought to say to him; and she detested a false position. But her woman's pulses fluttered and trembled as she tried to drive herself to the point of boldly taking her station on the veranda and waiting until he came out of Frederick's office. The slight droop, half sad, half bitter, remained at the corners of her mouth. Coming in from the hall to find her, David saw it when he drew near, and her grave, steady eyes.

His own pulses were tumultuous. It was the first time they had been alone, in privacy. He had

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held her in his arms and kissed her lips. Her full, steady look, not without a tragic dignity, denied the ardent impulse that would have made his hands stretch out to take her. He sat down before her quietly, with a faint, half-defeated smile.

"My dear," he said simply. In a way it put forward all his claim — yet patiently, even humbly.

"After so long a time, David?" she asked, low, with a kind of fond mournfulness.

"More than ever," he replied. "It was a kind of boy-and-girl affair. Perhaps it isn't fair to hold you to it." He looked at her unflinchingly. "I know your letters have been very different the last year or so. I've honestly been trying to tell myself it was something that was past and ended. But the minute I saw you again, Loie — it all comes back, more than ever. I have no choice, I simply must. That's all, Lou."

She bit her lip a little to stop its trembling. "We talked about the ballot-boxes, you know, David; and a great deal else along that line. You must have understood. If the letters were different— You had bribe money in your hands."

"I was honest with you about the ballot-boxes," he answered. "I was ashamed of myself and meant never to do such a thing again, just as I told you. The bribe money was entirely different. The distillers were getting an amendment of the dramshop act through the legislature. Of course they were paying for it. One of the members of the house

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from Sauganac was named Barbour — a fellow who had done some work for the street railroad off and on, buying parcels of real estate for right of way and so on. After the bill passed the house, Barbour died suddenly. The money wouldn't be paid until the bill passed the senate and was signed by the governor. Another member of the house came to me about it. Barbour had left his wife and children scarcely a cent. The brother member wanted them to have the thousand dollars which was the price of the vote Barbour had given for the bill. I told Codley's Man Friday — Codley is the distiller's chief counsel, you know; but he doesn't handle the money himself. I told the Man Friday to send me the thousand dollars and I'd turn it over to the widow as though it were due Barbour for work he had done for the street railroad. It happened there was a row on over the spoils. Some indignant statesmen claimed they weren't getting what they had been promised. The man who usually handles the cash for the boodlers in this section sided with the malcontents. So Codley had an express package, said to contain twelve thousand dollars, sent to me with a memorandum from Friday saying to whom it was to be paid. Codley had confidence in my discretion, you see, and as I was going to take Barbour's money he thought I might as well handle it all. I returned the express package and told him the Barbour money was all I cared to have anything to do with. The row got so violent that it was

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talked about pretty openly. So Winthrop and some others learned about it. They thought I ought to testify about the express package and Friday's memorandum, with which evidence they could convict Friday and a dozen legislators of bribery. I refused to do it, and convinced them that they couldn't make me do it."

"Why did you refuse?" she asked.

"Can't you see, Lou?" he replied. "It would have been easy to wash my hands of the whole thing and let the widow and children go without the thousand dollars. I preferred to help them get it. Having gone into it in that way, how could I turn state's evidence?"

"That's it, David. You put that sort of good fellowship above law and truth!"

He studied the floor a minute, with a darkened face. "Perhaps I was brought up wrong," he suggested with a trace of irony. "Dennis O'Neill was a sort of godfather to me, because he was fond of me. And Dennis — to his dying day, Lou, he will never be able to understand that politics is anything but a fine, nervy game of wits to be played for the offices and the graft. Winthrop's kind of politics seems to him just a new trick in the old game — a new way to catch votes. I suppose I had a knack for men's affairs. Dennis, out of fondness for me and pride in my aptness, taught me his game of politics early. When I was a high school lad playing ball, I knew what was going on in the

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ward clubs. Take the ballot-boxes — I happened to be in Dennis's office that afternoon, and a clerk of election came in and told Dennis how the other side had stuffed the ballot-boxes in three precincts; also how the stuffed boxes might be stolen by prompt action. It appealed to Dennis's sense of humor. I went because there was only one other man at hand whom he could trust. Dennis rolled on the floor when he pulled it off — stole the boxes the other fellows had stuffed."

"Oh, Davy! You smile a little even now! Back there — telling me about the bribed representative — you half made a joke of it. You went light-heartedly to those thieving policemen to find the policy-shop man who threatened Kittie! It's half a joke to you!" she cried in pain.

He bent forward. "Not half, Lou! Not near half! The little part that is a joke is all that's left of what I started out with." His voice shook and he palpably controlled himself. "Let me tell you, Lou. Don't you see, it looked just as unlikely that you'd be the girl I'd pick out as that I'd be a man you would care for. Yet from the first — that evening in Ann Arbor — you came in powerfully. Maybe it was because you were so different. You were a pretty hot-headed little piece sometimes; but the finest part of you came out in your letters to me — so sweet and clear — almost, dear, as though we were a sober married couple making up a life together. I built on them, my girl! I knew

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I oughtn't to go into the ballot-box business, and was ashamed of myself because I let it carry me off my feet. I have nothing to do with crooked politics. I mean to go straight. I built on it. It's a poor enough thing to say; but out of my first year's salary I put aside something toward a house. Don't you see how much it has got into my life?"

Her breast labored with the struggle to keep herself in hand. The unruly little pulses that had often leapt at his step, thrilled at his kiss, tried to betray her. "I don't doubt that, and I know the honor it is, Davy," she began rather blindly. "Tell me what you are doing up here to-day." He had come with Dennis O'Neill.

"Here?" he repeated blankly, not understanding. "Why, we're helping Fred in his suit against the Nogiac distillers."

"You are?" she cried breathlessly. "Really, Davy? Are you helping him?"

"Why, yes," he answered, vaguely wondering. "Bringing him some good evidence to use against them, you know. It's going to be a big fight, too. I'm going to get more evidence for him."

She bent toward him, aglow, her eyes bright, her lips slightly apart and touched by a smile. There was invitation in her face. Still at loss, but with a leap of the heart, he took her hand.

"And you've come over to our side, Davy, for that big fight!" In an instant she would be in his arms; but then he understood.

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"Of course, I'm doing it on Dennis's account," he said.

"Dennis's account?" she repeated. The glow faded from her face, and the little droop came back to the corners of her mouth.

"It's just this way, Lou," he explained, comprehending her disappointment, and very sober. "Dennis owns a little distillery here in Sauganac, you know. He's put all his money in it, and gone in debt to boot. When Dennis had his own way here politically, the big distillery combine, of which the Nogiac men are an important part, was very good-natured to him. They're rather sore because he let Winthrop be elected. Besides, it seems the big fellows are planning to form a big trust, to be floated in Wall Street. They've evidently made up their minds that it would be cheaper to rob Dennis of his plant than to buy it of him at a fair price. So of late they've begun to fight him — stealing his trade here and there and so on. You know how a trust does those things. Dennis doesn't propose to lie down. He proposes to fight. He's going to help Fred Hasbrook; giving him evidence of restraints of trade, blacklisting, and so on — simply to impress the big fellows with the idea that they'd best use him right. It's a rather ticklish business. Dennis is constitutionally suspicious of lawyers. He asks me to help him."

"It's a kind of blackmail," said she, with ominous quietness. "Dennis is trying to frighten the dis-

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tillers into paying him what he asks for his plant. When he does that, he will have no further interest in Frederick's suit."

"I suppose that's about it." He sighed. "Loie, why should I sit by and see the old man robbed? He's always been my friend. It isn't as you think — with all the good on one side and all the bad on the other. Fred knows Dennis's motive well enough."

"And you know Frederick's motive," she replied. "Is it greedy? Is it selfish? Has it no regard to anybody but himself? Will he sell out if he can make a profit? That — that's what I wish!" She took a small step nearer him, shaken with earnestness, a small furrow in her brow. "Davy! Tell me truly — in what's past, from the very beginning, did you ever misunderstand me?"

"I don't think I ever did," he said. "I always understood you meant I was to be square. I never heard of another girl meaning that — really meaning it the way you did. I guess that's why I've loved my girl so. I've built on it. Loie, if I can't see a particular case just as you do, you oughtn't to be rough on me."

"But I shall be rough on you, Davy! I shall be!" she burst forth passionately. "That's exactly my part! You're brave and generous and able. You must come clear over to our side, Davy — with honor and truth and justice! Not on Dennis O'Neill's side! Don't you see? I couldn't bear — could not bear — anything less than that. It

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would be my own shameful failure. If I'm not rough on you — I don't love you!" She sprang up, reddening.

He arose, bending his head to look more deeply into her eyes, with the ghost of a happy smile. "Red-hearted; stubborn-headed! My same dear unaccountable girl!" He laid an arm over her shoulder.

"No, Davy!" she refused, in a sweet, half-petulant confusion, turning her head to deny her lips. "You haven't said. You're still a grafter — some. You're with Dennis O'Neill."

He laughed low. "Anyway, I'll see one or two bombs landed in Nogiac. That will please you — although you'll pretend it won't!" He had let her slip from his lax arm.

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CHAPTER VII

THE first bomb landed in Nogiac promptly — in the form of a complaint filed with the Interstate Commerce Commission, setting forth the payment of certain freight rebates to the Grand Mogul Distillery, the evidence having been furnished by Dennis O'Neill. This formally opened the battle.

Toward eleven o'clock, one pleasant October day, Mr. A. B. Codley, — commonly known as "Old Alphabet," — chief counsel for the Nogiac distillers, issued from the Sauganac House and trudged serenely down Broadway. The lawyer was just turned sixty-five. His tall, bony, loosely knit frame was clad in a trig suit of autumn brown. He wore brown shoes and a white felt hat, neatly dented across the crown. There was something ineradicably rustic in his awkward figure, with flat, clumping feet, and hands of which every finger was crooked. His mild affectation of style, therefore, looked incongruous. His sallow face was smooth-shaven save for a grizzly mustache that only half hid his thick upper lip. The lower lip was even thicker, and his long chin receded into the leathery folds of tough skin underneath. His eyes were small, gray, set close up to the bridge of his nose. There was no humor in

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them; so that they seemed not exactly to fit the big, rather humorous mouth and long nose.

Codley was rich — worth half a million — and famous; but of late his acute mind had pretty accurately apprized certain signs which suggested that he was becoming, in a measure, a back number. He was a lawyer who had always secured results. But with the vague drift of public spirit there were getting to be more rich clients who drew the line at jury-bribing, subornation of perjury, and like arts which he had freely practised — and with a kind of openness, too. His one daughter was getting to be decidedly an old maid. She it was, chiefly, who had made him aware that a scheme of social selection was afoot in which money did not count for everything. It had been quite a tragedy to Mrs. and Miss Codley when the Country Club blackballed the eminent barrister. Miss Codley personally had no particular eligibility; yet it had seemed too much — an overflowing of the bitter cup — when Mrs. Penrose herself had invited the Schwartz girls down to her lawn fête, but not Miss Codley. The result of all this was to give Old Alphabet a fine dash of malignancy.

Nevertheless, trudging leisurely down Broadway, he paused to give a silent chuckle over a newsboy who was producing a prodigious volume of sound out of a very small body; and he tossed the boy a dime. Presently, with something the same sort of amusement, he halted to look over the *Sauganac Daily News'* bulletin-board. The newspaper was

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housed in a shabby, two-story brick building toward the lower end of Broadway — where it began to trail off into out-at-elbows regions. The lower floor was occupied by the business office. Codley clumped up the narrow and not over clean stairs that led to the editorial and composing rooms, which took up the second story and were divided only by a rickety pine railing. A young man in shirt sleeves, scribbling at an old desk, saw the lawyer, nodded genially, and hastened to the editor's sanctum, which was a kind of stall partitioned off in the corner. Julius Brown, the editor, ran out with extended hand and warm, wide grin.

The editor was a kind of intellectual and spiritual protégé of the lawyer, and had consciously formed himself on that eminent model. The distillers, guided by Codley, really owned the controlling interest in the paper. Beside the littered editorial desk, with the door shut, Codley sat down deliberately.

"Julius, I am confronted with a pious task," he began in slow, amiable tones. "I think you can give me a boost. So I came down to show you just how the ground lies."

The editor nodded, rather eagerly, grinning and turning a pencil end for end in his blunt fingers.

"All the big distillers," Codley continued, in his good-natured drawl, "are going into a trust. It will take in the best Illinois concerns, the three houses at Nogiac, some in Pennsylvania and Kentucky.

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The capital will be up in nine figures. The Wall Street gentlemen who are going to promote it and float it will see that it's large enough. Of course, we'll have to clean up a score or so of little concerns, scattered over the country, in order to have a proper grip on the trade. This plant at Sauganac will be included in the cleaning process. Personally I like Dennis O'Neill tiptop," the lawyer went on. "But he hasn't been doing his duty as a patriot. He shouldn't have let that fellow Holmes be elected prosecuting attorney. It mars the symmetry of our plans. Dennis's oversight irritates us. So we've been giving him the chastening gaff a bit of late."

Julius nodded again. "I know," he said.

"Yes," said Codley, amiably. "We thought it would be right to knock off about half the value of his plant before purchasing. Dennis took it hard. He's rushed off to Freddy Hasbrook and given him some evidence to use against us. That wasn't friendly."

"Freddy being an ass, anyhow," said the editor.

"Exactly," Codley replied. "Freddy being an ass. We don't apprehend any serious difficulty in dealing with Dennis. We'll take away the rest of his trade and get two or three law-suits started to muss up his credit, and he will see the light. Dennis is a reasonable man."

Mr. Codley regarded the editor a moment with sinister little eyes. "It's Freddy Hasbrook that I'm after."

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"Hasbrook is an ass," Julius repeated, with emphasis.

"He thinks he's some pumpkins," said the lawyer, "having a good deal of money and some prestige, both derived solely from his father. He's strong on the society dodge, you know; very four hundredy. He doesn't approve some good business men of Nogiac who've made their money themselves, instead of letting their fathers make it, and who happen to be in the whiskey trade. I learn that he proposes to pitch into us red hot. I suppose he wants to get his name and picture in the papers, with a little halo over it. He'd love to have the ladies cluster about his manly form and beg him to tell 'em just how he slew the naughty distillery dragon. I told Charlie Schwartz to leave Freddy entirely to me; that I'd guarantee to take out his little tin insides and lay 'em along the sidewalk for children to play with. I have a score or two of my own with Freddy. It's a labor of love with me."

Mr. Codley strove to keep his voice to the same level, drawling, amiable manner; but in spite of himself a dull color touched his sallow cheeks, his eyes lighted ominously.

"Freddy thinks it very good form to throw bricks at me, in his top-lofty manner — and at my family." Old Alphabet's voice was heavy with passion now; his eyes narrowed to burning points. "I'm going after Freddy."

The editor felt himself somewhat infected by the

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other's smothered wrath. "You'll get him," he said, half in sympathy, half in admiration.

"I'll get him," Codley repeated, after a slight pause; and returned more to his normal manner. "That's where I need your valuable assistance, Julius. There's a girl staying at the Hasbrook place part of the time."

Julius ceased turning the pencil in his fingers and thoughtfully worried his mustache a moment. "I don't believe there's a thing in that," he said quite low. "She's a sort of ward of the Senator — Winthrop Holmes's sister, you know. I don't believe there's a thing in it."

"Well, maybe not," Codley replied coolly. "Still it never does any hurt to keep an eye out. I'll have a good man report to you — for I don't care to be on the ground myself. Usually there's a maid or two about the house who'll tell what's going on for a reasonable consideration. We'll just keep an eye out. Do you remember that old story about Freddy and a milliner?"

"Yes, I remember it," said Julius. "Nellie Trescott was her name. She used to keep a kind of double-barrelled store up on Maple Street — millinery in one side, gent's furnishings in the other. She went away, and her husband got a divorce. Somebody put up some money, for the husband was in funds for a while. He was killed in a railroad wreck. Nellie went West — out to Montana as I remember it — and married again and died seven

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or eight years ago. The story was that Fred Hasbrook put up the money — which induced the good-natured husband to let Nellie go and to get a divorce. But that all happened twenty years ago, you know."

"Yes," said Old Alphabet, and sighed. "It doesn't sound at all promising — a youngster and a milliner, twenty years ago." He drummed thoughtfully on the table with the ends of his fingers. "I've discovered this, Julius, in my long and energetic career — that only about one man in a dozen is put together all snug and tight without any loose ends hanging. The other eleven — if you just keep on looking 'em over carefully enough, by and by you'll find a loose thread somewhere, and if you take hold of it and pull with proper discretion, you'll soon have him all unravelled and inside out. I'm going to checkmate Freddy this trip, and I won't overlook any ravellings."

"There are two Trescott daughters," the editor suggested. "The older one married a tin-horn gambler named Doane. I don't know where the other is. By the way, that reminds me. Rexford, my sporting editor, was telling me the other day that it was Doane who'd been running a fake policy shop here and came within an ace of getting nabbed in one of Holmes's raids, and that he had a woman with him. It might — possibly — have been his wife, the Trescott girl."

"Well, look it up," Codley replied. "If we can

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get hold of the girl, she may know something that'll help. We won't overlook any ravellings. I'll have a good man report to you — half a dozen of 'em if necessary. Have Rexford see if he can locate the tin-horn one. We won't overlook any ravellings."

He drummed on the table again. "This distillers' trust, Julius, means a good many hard million dollars to my clients. They're anxious to pull it off right. The people in Wall Street are pretty sore and nervous just now — there's been so much trust-busting talk and all that. They don't want any rows and newspaper hullabaloos on their hands. They're kind of hanging back on this distillery affair because they're afraid there will be a row. So, you see, Hasbrook's attack came at an inopportune moment. Of course, with his money and prestige and so on he can raise a good deal of hell if he's a mind to. It's necessary for important business reasons to choke him off promptly. And then, as I observed, it's a labor of love with me."

"Oh, you'll get him all right," said the editor, cheerfully.

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CHAPTER VIII

"WHAT is it, Annie?" called Louise, rather sharply.

"Nothing. I was going to dust the vases," said the girl, and disappeared.

Louise was annoyed. It was the second time she had caught the maid slipping past the door and peering in. One couldn't expect the servants in a men's house to be very well disciplined; but this girl's overgrown curiosity was displeasing.

Louise frowned slightly as she returned to her book. She was sitting in the front room of the right-hand wing — the one Frederick used as an office. Her book looked unpromising enough. It was a thick volume bound in blue pasteboard, and it contained the report of a congressional committee which, some eight years before, had made an investigation of the distilling industry. It might yield some ammunition for Frederick. She rested her elbow on the table beside the fat tome, her chin in her palm, a pencil, ready to make notes, in the other hand, and resumed reading. Presently she was aware that some one stood at the hall door. An angry suspicion of the peeking maid disturbed her mind; but she kept on reading. Even when the person gently entered the room, she did not look up, for she did not

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wish to be interrupted. It was only when the intruder had stood silently beside her chair a moment that she did look up.

Then she cried, "Why, Teddie!" colored with pleasure, and reached both hands, laughing.

The young man, laughing also, kept her hands a moment; then took the chair beside her. He was slender, with a thin, dark face that seemed to laugh easily. His hair was fairly black, parted in the middle, and full of kinks that gave a foreign suggestion. Whenever he smiled, dimples came in his lean cheeks. In his school days those dimples and the kinky hair had been the cause of many a gallant and generally disastrous battle — for sometimes a boy would call him "sissy," which always meant a fight. The shaven beard gave a bluish tinge to the lower part of his face and his slim hands bore the mark of Esau. He was not effeminate; yet in looking at him one thought, what a stunning girl he would have made!

"When did you get home? They said you'd gone north fishing. What luck?" She threw the questions at him in a lump, still laughing in a way which both made a joke of him and took him to her heart.

Teddie Penrose, only son and heir of that house, laughed with engaging frankness. "As for luck, I can't fish any better than I can do anything else. But I had a good time forgetting my troubles."

"But you've settled down here now — gone into business," she said in a more earnest tone.

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"Not exactly," he answered lightly. "I seem not to get the hang of business. I was about ready to chuck it. The fishing trip was a sort of letting myself down easy. I say! Why not come for a spin? I've got the machine out here."

She knew that he wished to talk to her. "Let me get a hat," she replied, and arose.

He brought something back to her — association with numberless pleasant, interesting things; an atmosphere of richly appointed ease which unworthily appealed to an unregenerate capacity for luxury in her. Even as she walked across the lawn with him and climbed into the expensive car, the mellow air of that indulgent year abroad, with all the vulgar little annoyances of life brushed away, wafted itself back to her. Besides, she was very fond of Teddie. As the machine rolled smoothly forward, she sank back in the comfortable seat and let herself go in luxurious enjoyment.

Penrose was in no hurry to begin his talk. He bubbled gossipy nonsense, in the joy of having her beside him, as the car slipped down the macadamized road into asphalted Overlook Boulevard.

"Lovely joint!" he laughed, as they rolled past the Penrose castle — rather small for a castle in everything except its quality of stony gloom, as it bullied uselessly over its gentle lawn. They passed Mr. Titus's villa and Epperson's colonial mansion — fruit of the patent medicines — and other dwellings of the town's rich. As they approached the business

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centre the houses became less pretentious, nearer together. Then they passed the Court House which stood in the centre of a little plateau, a block in extent, at the toe of the bluff and fifteen feet higher than the street level. The building was a three-story sandstone cube, the erection of which had yielded its due proportion of graft. Thus the purpose of the row of granite columns across the front of the second story was not at all what it seemed to be — namely, to darken the windows — but to give a firm of stone masons a profitable job. The tall, square clock-tower also had been a lucrative afterthought of the contractors. Louise was not thinking of the graft, however. Her heart quickened a little as she looked up at this capitol of Mission County, for her eyes rested on the windows of the prosecuting attorney's office in the second story.

Leaving the pride of Broadway to the left, with the towering cornice and bare flagpole of the First National Bank Building, they turned to cross the river. The street railroad was building its new power-house on the flats along the river bank. Otherwise the district was dingy.

"Blasted Irishman!" Teddie observed, showing his dimples and white teeth. He was looking at the big, unfinished power-house.

Louise laughed back. "What's Davy been doing to you now?"

"Why, he runs his street railroad with one hand; and comes over every now and then and puts in an

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odd half hour pulling my little shop straight — just slopping over with efficiency, you know!"

She laughed again, fondly, knowing the old-time friendship between the two men.

They rolled out on the long bridge. Most of the city's factories huddled on the other bank. A huge sign, surmounting an iron roof a block long, said "James A. Penrose Stove Works, Largest in the World." And this sign was repeated on half a dozen lesser roofs. But crowning all was a colossal structure built on the roof of a big, fort-like edifice and so arranged as to be illuminated with electric lights at night. Well out in the lake one could read its dual legend: "Fruit Essences for Catarrh"; "The Household Remedy for Women."

"Epperson's got the right idea," said Teddie. "Fruit Essences is mostly cocaine and the Household Remedy is sixty per cent cheap whiskey. If neither will cure you alone, mix 'em together and be happy! A pious man, too! Builds churches, and raised the funds for Brother Winthrop's reform campaign, you know!"

"Winthrop can't help that," she replied soberly.

"Honest business men backed him, too. I chipped in myself. See my infant industry? There she blows — right at the tail of the largest in the world."

She looked where he indicated and saw a modest, rather shabby brick shop with the sign, "Inland Queen Bicycles."

"The queen looks sort of dopey herself. Been

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taking Fruit Essences, I reckon," he suggested, as they turned and began climbing the hill whose shoulder rapidly shut out the view of the factories.

"You know I got into a pretty fierce mess in Florence," he said abruptly, and with a quite sober frankness. She recalled that his departure thence had seemed precipitate. "Of course, father paid the shot. There's never any trouble about that. But it rather put me in a way of thinking I could see my finish, so I decided to try living over here. Father turned this little plant over to me. I suppose he'd foreclosed on it or found it lying loose in the back yard. My idea is there's no use of a fellow living in this country unless he can do business. The loafing is pleasanter on the other side. Honest Injun, Lou, I've worked like a nailer at this little one-horse bicycle plant; but it don't come out right. I can't get the hang of it. I'm just a joke to the men there."

"Oh, but you will get the hang of it, Teddie! You'll get the experience with time. That's what you need! That's what you lack — some experience; and just biting hard on the bit and wading straight in! You can do it! Oh, I know you can!" she declared with a warm conviction.

He looked ahead, gravely. "I'm afraid not, Loie. I could cram for an exam — if I had to, you know. I've got some brains. I can play bridge first-rate. But I haven't got even a poor imitation of executive ability. Now, Davy, you know — what he says

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to his men goes, for they know he knows. They know I don't know, and the men and the whole business simply play horse with me. I hate giving it up, too, because it would be so easy for father to do it that he can't understand how I could fail if I really tried my best. It will tend to confirm his previous opinion that I'm not much good. That means a pension and more loafing." He looked at her with a slight, rather wan smile. "Which isn't really good for me."

"Don't you give it up, Teddie! Don't you do it, old man! Wade straight in! I know you won't fail finally! Stick to it, Ted!" He fairly felt the energy that her words suggested, and the ardent good-will like a brave arm thrown around his shoulders.

"Yes. You could do it, Loie!" he said. "My education wasn't commercial. I fell to mother, you know. Possibly she made a gentleman of me. Father stood aside with his hands in his pockets, as he does about the high-priced jimcracks mother buys abroad. It isn't altogether my fault that I can't run a bicycle factory. It's so comforting to blame somebody else!" He smiled again.

"You can make it go! It needs only time and patience. I'm sure you can make it go, Ted," she affirmed eagerly. "Davy will give you a lift, in getting started right, whenever you need it! I know he will!" She had hardly meant to speak with that authority of him.

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"Yes, Davy can do it for me, and will," he replied. "But what good is that? It isn't running it myself. So I've fired him out of it." He looked around at her. "I need a boss, Lou; but not Davy — for I hate him some, too."

She knew of old the odd, impersonal sort of jealousy that lay in his warm friendship for the abler, stronger man. It was exactly like him to mention it now, when almost any one else would have striven to conceal it. The little confession touched her intimately. He was sweet and open. As a matter of course, she loved him in a way. There had been moments before when the mother in her, and her generous will to sacrifice and her militant will to make herself felt, all arose to him. She could be very fond of him and keep him up to his best. She had even an odd sort of detached judgment which, so far as it went, quite coincided with what she knew to be Mrs. Penrose's able judgment of their mutual eligibility.

"I surely need a boss. Some day you may take the job!" He spoke smiling. Twice or thrice before he had said something to the same effect; but it was unnecessary. His whole attitude expressed it — a kind of open-handed, good-humored offering of himself, as though he mostly knew it out of the question, yet stuck to a hope that she might one day take him.

No reply was needed. She simply let a decent little pause intervene; then said, "Speaking of bosses, when is your mother coming out?"

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He accepted it good-naturedly. "Next month. You know Sister Titus and Brother Bascom have decided to give an orthodox horseshow. I suppose it appeals to mother's sense of humor. At any rate she writes that she's coming out then. Father has some Englishmen whom he's going to take West to show a railroad. They'll kill the two birds with one stone."

"I'd heard of the horseshow," she replied, half absently. In fact she was looking ahead, with interest. The roadside view ahead included a tall hedge, with a triumphal entrance arch of pine, painted red, white, and blue, and ornamented with a string of Chinese lanterns. The sign on the arch said, "Schmidt's Family Garden." A single pursy figure sat forlornly beneath the arch, and, recognizing Teddie as they sped by, waved a mournfully hospitable arm.

"Good thing he didn't know you," said Teddie. "He'd have run for a gun."

This was the beer garden that Winthrop had closed. She turned in the seat to glance back at the foe. The battle was all about them!

Coming back, as they slipped down to the bridge, she laid her hand on his arm.

"Don't give it up, Teddie. You can do it. I want to see you pull through."

It was different from the way she had spoken going out — in a way softer, more intimate, because more decidedly sisterly. He realized it and smiled,

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and let out the machine in defiance of the sign that warned against speeding on the bridge.

At the other end of the bridge, as they sped and turned to ascend, four men stepped from behind a pile of brick where the new power-house was building. Three were in workmen's dress, the other pointing. They were so close that the wind of their car fluttered his coat, and a long thrill pulled at Louise's nerves. Not that he had been in any danger, and she did not care about mere business efficiency, but the little fleeting picture of him directing his men was oddly suggestive. For a moment she let herself dream, and see him at an outpost, the light of a watchfire on his tanned cheek. There would be none braver than he.

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CHAPTER IX

THE horseshow was held in the big shell of the incomplete street railroad power-house. Preparations for the tremendous society event considerably interested the female and juvenile population of the dingy neighborhood. The prevailing adult male attitude was expressed by the bartender of the United States Hotel, who declared that he wouldn't be caught dead with such a bunch.

The hotel was half a block up the street from the power-house. It had seen better days, although its best days were nothing to boast of. Some of its guests came solely because of economy, others because its slovenly, down-at-the-heel, out-at-elbows air corresponded with the general scheme of their lives, and there was a certain delicate suggestion about the place which, to the initiated, conveyed a comforting idea that the police didn't trouble themselves overmuch about it. It was perfectly natural, for example, that Mrs. Harris Doane should select it for her brief sojourn in her native city. She looked like a woman who belonged there. Like the hotel, she had seen better days, but they had been nothing in particular to boast of. She had grown rather stout and flabby. There was something pathetic in the brittle, chemical yellow of her hair.

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She sat at a third-story window, rocking and chewing gum with equal violence, a feline wrath darkening her fleshy face and snapping in her brown eyes.

"You always was stubborn as a mule! You always used me like a dog, too!" Her complaining voice rose with her anger. "If I can make a dollar, what you want to stand in my way for? I ain't ever done anything to you, have I? Fine sister you've been to me!"

Fanny Trescott looked steadily out of the other window without replying, her own face dark and stony.

"Can't you speak, numbskull?" Mrs. Doane's voice climbed to a sort of shriek under the intolerable exasperation of her sister's stubborn silence. "What you got against Wes Wogan?"

"He's a drunken bum," Fanny replied, low. "I'll not show my mother's letters to him or to anybody like him." She looked over at the elder woman then, her fine black brows drawn together. "Tell me the truth. What do you want of those letters?"

"I tol' you what I wanted of 'em!" Mrs. Doane struggled to keep herself measurably in hand. "Fan, I tol' you all about it when I first saw you down there in Tennessee." She flew out violently again. "What business is it of yours, anyhow? She's as much my mother as she is yours, ain't she? I got a right to them letters!"

This outburst was met by a return, on Fanny's

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part, to the stony silence; and the sister struggled again — under the handicap of a very poor set of nerves — to get control of herself. "It's just as I tol' you, Fan," she complained. "Doane's got some money now; and I can jump him and get some alimony; but I gotta be in a position to prove the handwriting of them letters. If you'd give 'em to me, or just loaned 'em to me, as I wanted you to, there wouldn't 'a' been all this expense. I'll give 'em back to you, Fan." She was almost whimpering now.

"I told you, Jennie," Fanny replied. "The letters ain't in mother's hand."

"That's just it!" Mrs. Doane returned, with an eager showing of hope. "That's just what I gotta prove. Wogan's got some of mother's hand and some of mine, and if I can satisfy him them letters ain't in mother's hand or in mine, he'll go ahead and jump Doane and get me some alimony. Blame it all, Fan, what you afraid of? I don' ast you to give me the letters. Just go to Wogan's office with me and show 'em to him. You promised you would."

"I didn't know you meant Wes Wogan," Fanny answered. "I supposed you meant some decent lawyer — or I wouldn't have come here with you. Wogan's a bum. I won't show him the letters." She turned suddenly, anticipating the flow of rage. "Mother couldn't hardly speak when she gave 'em to me. I won't show 'em to Wogan. He ain't respectable."

This seemed too much for Mrs. Doane's poor

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nerves. "He wasn't never caught running a policy shop, was he?"

Fanny's lips parted. Evidently she was startled. Mrs. Doane perceived it, and realized that she had betrayed herself. Her own confusion caused her to turn her face to the window, for a long, self-reproachful, panicky moment.

"Well, of course, if you won't, you won't, Fan," she presently said, soothingly. "It's a good six or seven hundred dollars to me; but I suppose you know best." She spoke sisterly, and added, "Guess they're going to have a good crowd to their horse-show." Indeed, a stream of people flowed down the street, brilliantly lighted for this once; carriages passed, and occasionally an automobile.

Fanny saw the people; but they did not interest her. Her whole mind had leapt to an alarmed alertness at her sister's careless taunt.

Her non-legal understanding had never been able to extract from Jennie's voluble but vague explanations just why it was so necessary for the elder sister to have possession of those old letters in order to get her divorce from Doane — at this goldenly propitious moment when he was in fund and could be made to yield some alimony. Jennie had said that Doane knew about the letters and would accuse her of having written them and so defeat her bill for divorce. Fanny herself knew that Doane knew better, although she did not care, in conversation with Jennie, to touch upon anything connected with

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the policy-shop episode; and she conceived that Doane, while knowing better, might easily lie about it. She would not give Jennie the letters; yet she was loath to have it upon her conscience that she had stood in the way of her sister getting some alimony. Finally, although she couldn't exactly understand it, she consented to come to Sauganac with Jennie, the elder sister having offered to pay expenses.

She had consented because, if she could help Jennie, she felt bound to do it, and not because she had been able to work out a very clear or satisfactory hypothesis as to the real usefulness of the letters in her sister's cause.

Doane knew about the letters. From whom, save Doane, could Jennie have learned about the policy shop? She could not see what Doane wanted of the letters any more than she could see what Jennie wanted of them. The idea that he did want them took possession of her alarmed mind. As a matter of course, Doane wouldn't want them for any respectable purpose. She was an outlaw in Sauganac, subject to arrest and imprisonment, she supposed; hence not in a position to summon the aid of the law. She felt herself in a trap.

"It looks as though they'd have a good crowd," she said, looking out of the window.

"Folks must be hard up for a way to blow in their dough," Jennie commented, and added, genially: "I'm awful thirsty. Le's have a bottle of beer."

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"I don't want any beer," Fanny said.

"Come on. A glass won't hurt you," Jennie enticed. "I'm dry as a fish. It'll make you sleep better." She arose, as to ring the bell.

A single, bare gas-jet flared in the room, giving a somewhat uneven light. And it seemed to Fanny that, by this light, she saw something lurking, catlike, in Jennie's eye.

"You drink the beer if you want to," she replied. Her heart was beating faster. She was aware that a single glass of beer sometimes exerted a tremendous soporific influence.

"Pshaw!" Jennie exclaimed petulantly; and resumed her seat, with a flounce. But she kept herself in hand. "We'll have to get up early," she observed, after a moment.

"Yes," said Fanny. "There's" — her voice died away for an instant. "There's a lot of people going to the show." Staring down at the people, with an active mind, she thought it was Mr. Harris Doane whom she had seen on the opposite corner, looking up at their windows. The figure swiftly disappeared, however. She seemed to feel a trap closing in around her; and the packet of letters in her breast appeared to beat with the throbbing of her heart.

"Let's go to the show," she said suddenly.

"Not any," Jennie replied with disgust.

"Come on," Fanny coaxed. "I never saw a horseshow. It only costs half a dollar to get in.

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I'm going to take a look at it." She stood up. "Then we'll drink our beer and go to bed," she added artfully.

"What do you want to go there for?" Jennie demanded, regarding her dubiously, and at a loss.

"Just to take a look at it a few minutes. I've got just seventy cents. Might as well blow it in. Then we'll drink our beer and go to bed." She was already putting on her hat.

Mrs. Doane was displeased. It was true, however, that Fanny had only a little change, and her bag was in the room. She didn't know exactly how to prevent the excursion.

"Don't stay long, Fan," she cautioned, complainingly. "I'm tired as a dog. I want to go to bed early."

"I won't," said Fanny, as she went out.

Emerging upon the street she gave a swift glance about. She believed she was watched — probably by Doane. It was with this idea in mind that she turned, on the opposite corner, smiling and waving her hand in ostentatious greeting to the third-story window where she had left Jennie. Then she went on with the crowd; paid her half dollar, and entered the show.

Even under these circumstances, she had an humiliated consciousness that her skirt, jacket, and hat were rather shabby — for she had been very frugal since she took the job in Tennessee. She made a poor figure in the crowd. She had not dared

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walk by the entrance without going in, for fear Doane was following her — perhaps prepared to have her taken in custody by one of his thievish police friends. She thought, once inside the building, she could find a way to slip out again. Her forlorn position blent with her shabby clothes to give her a kind of homesickness as she looked upon the gala scene.

Almost the first person she saw whom she knew was Ted Penrose, standing near the entrance with two other young men, all three in evening dress. She stood aside, her eyes upon him, catching at the straw. He saw her in a moment and instantly came up, with a gay smile, holding out his hand.

"Well, well! Come home for the show, Fanny? That's a right idea!"

"Could you lend me fifteen dollars, Ted? I want to get home and I haven't any money." She said it gravely; but without a blush or a wavering of her large, dark eyes, laying her need before him in a kind of nobly simple nakedness.

"Good old friend! Why wouldn't I lend you all you want? What else is the money for?" He too spoke gravely, under the sudden generous emotion, and as simply as herself.

A faint, grateful smile touched her eyes and lips. She had known him a long time, even when she was a dining-room girl in Donovan's hotel. He had always been fine to her — the finest of any man she ever knew. She understood him, too.

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He was fine to her because she had to work for a living; because the edge of necessity made her footing difficult. Exactly that in her condition which put her at a disadvantage and so tempted some men to try to trip her made this man hold out the firm hand of a friend. He had that kind of chivalry. Plenty of other men — David Donovan, for example — had been nice, kindly, even generous to her. But with them it was a sort of comraderie. They all belonged in a way to the same big working army; and they did not touch her imagination as did this figure from what, to her, was a different sphere.

Ted laughed. "Lucky it's only an imitation horseshow, or I'd be broke myself. But come have a look at it now you're here. Might as well. You must get the worth of your money, you know." He laughed again. "Brother Bascom is having his own troubles getting the thing started."

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CHAPTER X

THE show indeed lagged. The idea of it originated with Mrs. Titus, wife of the president of the First National Bank. She had seen the exhibition in New York the year before, and her placid mind was untroubled by any doubt that Sauganac's show was essentially the same thing on a reduced scale and an elevated moral plane.

The banker's lady weighed two hundred. She had a large, good-humored face lighted by dull but handsome brown eyes, and a fine double chin. Modesty forbade her to wear the conventional evening toilet; and a multiplicity of jet ornaments, over her ample, silk-covered bosom, moved with its powerful undulations and murmured a kind of blissful content as she promenaded on the arm of Mr. Epperson, junior — a negligible person, of his distinguished father's lank build, but without that person's ability. His most noticeable feature was an exaggerated Adam's apple. His self-consciousness was expressed in a nervous, furtive fingering of his white tie. Every time he swallowed the Adam's apple climbed his stringy neck, peered over the top of his shiny collar, then dived down, as not liking the view. The self-consciousness of Mrs. Titus, on the

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other hand, was bland, joyous. Her eyes roved complacently over the gathering which her talents had evoked. She bowed as amiably to persons on the highest tier of benches as to those in the single row of boxes. This impenetrable satisfaction greatly disturbed some ladies up aloft. One of them moaned to her companion:—

"Oh, the cow! She hasn't even sense enough to know it's a joke! She can't see that Mrs. Penrose is laughing at her!"

Mrs. Penrose, however, was not laughing, but smiling with the highest good humor. Her box was the centre of the show. Every one looked at her. Many women speculated as to what her simple dull-black gown really cost. She was at once a triumph and a defeat. She held herself with erect grace. The firm, smooth white neck carried her shapely head at a daintily imperious poise. Her dark eyes sparkled with life; and her figure kept the lines of a supple girl. Even the silvery powdering of her hair, above the vivacious face, was a charm in itself. One thought, "A beautiful woman!" That was a triumph, for her son was twenty-six. Yet there were sharply marked lines from her delicately arched nose downward. The perfect rose had departed from her clear complexion. Her hair was turning gray. Time had touched her. That was the defeat. One thought, "What must she have been at twenty!"

Her husband, a solid and powerful man, some-

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what heavy-looking in evening clothes, sat behind her and talked across the box rail with Mr. Titus and Mr. Epperson. The handsome banker wore that chastened air which he always put on with this penitential evening garb. He had no opinion of the show except that it was one of those trying digressions from business to which a good husband must dutifully submit. He knew that his wife was capable in managing her household and that she had a solid understanding of business. The idea that she was socially inept never occurred to him; the subject itself had no interest for him. He and Epperson were discussing with Mr. Penrose a plan for buying the electric light company and consolidating it with the street railroad. The young superintendent, David Donovan, had evolved the plan and was urging it upon them.

As it was Mrs. Titus's horseshow a certain responsibility devolved, ex-officio, upon Mr. Bascom. Nothing could have been more innocent than the partnership between this pair. Together they ran the First Presbyterian Church, and whatever else came within range. Mr. Bascom was now in the paddock, bustling and perspiring over the belated arrangements for bringing in the horses. Unfortunately, the citizen who combined a thorough understanding of horses with high moral qualities, and who, therefore, had been selected by Mrs. Titus to superintend this incident of the enterprise, had fallen ill at the last moment. Landlord Donovan

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had been available, but there was a certain broad flavor of conviviality in the landlord's character which, while it by no means disqualified him for contributing liberally to the show, made it unmeet that he should be distinguished by participation in the management. In this crisis Mr. Bascom had resorted to the heroic expedient of hiring a professional horseman; but to his consternation the expert had appeared far gone in liquor, and now sat boozily dozing in the corner — a hideous monument to human frailty. Landlord Donovan had good-naturedly responded to the cry for help, and was now rapidly reducing chaos to order in spite of Mr. Bascom's excited and misapplied assistance.

During the wait Mrs. Penrose's mischieviously roving dark eyes lighted upon a pair near the entrance. She turned to Louise.

"Who's that with Ted?" she asked.

Louise looked in the direction of the questioner's glance, and puzzled a moment, with a vague dawning of alarm.

"It's surely Fanny Trescott," she said.

"Trescott?" Mrs. Penrose regarded her questioningly.

"Surely, it's Fanny Trescott," Louise repeated, and added: "Perhaps you remember a Mrs. Trescott who kept a millinery shop here long ago. This is her daughter."

The mischief quite died out of Mrs. Penrose's eyes. A subtle settling took place in the beautiful

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face. She seemed to forget those with her. Her eyes steadily followed the slowly moving pair. Presently she surprised Louise with an abrupt question: —

"She doesn't live here, does she?"

It took Louise a moment to remember whom she meant. Then she said, "I think not. I believe she's living somewhere in Tennessee — working in a sort of sanitarium. I hear she's capable."

Mrs. Penrose appeared not to have heard the last. Her eyes had returned to Ted and his friend. By now she could see the girl's face clearly. Ted looked up at the box with a gay smile.

Louise spoke to her. "Here are the Senator and Frederick."

Mrs. Penrose turned from Ted and Fanny then to find the other pair; smiled and nodded to them; then beckoned. Father and son came up to the box obediently; were made known to young Mr. and Mrs. Osborne of New York. Frederick, it seemed, already knew Mr. Varnum, who appeared to be rather especially Mrs. Penrose's young cavalier. In the urbane chatter a slight indication, given by a faint motion of Mrs. Penrose's shapely head, put Frederick in Mr. Varnum's chair at her side.

"We'll have a horseshow twice a year, if it will bring you out, Betty," he said, as he took the seat.

"Once a year is plenty," she replied in a voice lower than his own; still lower she said, "Nellie Trescott's daughter is here."

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"Yes?" he replied softly. "I supposed the earth had swallowed her up."

"Ted has her here," she said, her shoulder almost touching his. "Find out what he's doing with her."

"I will, Betty," he answered very soberly.

They sat so close together that she could not very well look at him; but he could look down at her beautiful head and shoulders. In spite of the silvery powdering of her hair she might still have been a girl. "I'll find out at once," he repeated.

The band struck up. Some horses came in — quite successfully. The show was beginning. When Mrs. Penrose looked about, Teddie and his companion had disappeared.

The show seemed well enough; but Louise was quick to detect that it was not a success for Mrs. Penrose. That imperious lady's humorous zest for it seemed to have evaporated. Louise was not surprised when the hostess proposed going home, therefore, at the intermission.

When they got outside, a fresh vexation awaited. The chauffeur was on hand; but the car was gone. Ted had taken it. Mr. Penrose accepted it philosophically; but Mrs. Penrose was hardly at pains to conceal her ill-humor. While they were debating whether to go inside again, the missing car appeared up the street, going at a good speed, with Ted alone in the driver's seat.

"Hello? Kept you waiting?" he sang out amiably, as he swung up to the curb. "Had to take a friend to the railroad station."

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He saw his mother's sparkling eye, and met it with a brilliant, mischievous smile. "I supposed you'd be enthralled with the show," he laughed as he sprang out.

The party entered the car, and made room for him. "No, thank you," he said. "I couldn't think of missing the rest of the show." He was looking at his mother as he said it, and laughing mischievously — telling her plainly enough that he preferred to wait until she had forgotten her provocation.

They left him at the curb, like a spoiled but still sweet-tempered youngster enjoying the joke of his mother's vexation. Mrs. Penrose knew he laughed at her, and loved him and wished to box his ears.

"Speed up," she called impatiently as they turned into the boulevard. The chauffeur obeyed, and the unlawful, thirty-mile gait stopped conversation.

Louise had taken the front seat. She bent her head to the wind which whipped in little stinging, pleasantly exciting lashes under the furs about her neck. She heard the honk of the horn, a shout; felt the quick swerve of the machine; then a crash and an impact which, however, was so light that it scarcely unsettled her seat. The machine slowed and turned. She saw the wreck of a peddler's cart which a decrepit and terrified nag was trying to drag up the terrace to Mr. Epperson's lawn. The street was strewn with apples, in the midst of which a man sat up and loosened a stream of objurgation in the accents of sunny Italy.

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"He's all right," said Mrs. Penrose. "It's always such a relief when they begin to swear. You know they're not hurt much. Give our name and drive on."

Her good-humor seemed mysteriously restored by the accident. The potent name was called back. The car described another circle and rolled homeward.

"A very neat shot, Webster," said the hostess. "I must brush up on Italian. I could understand only three of the names he called us."

The chauffeur explained that the cart came from a side street and the panic-stricken driver countered his effort to avoid it. But Mrs. Penrose paid no attention to the explanation.

"Sober, Loie?" she asked. "It's a perfectly fair game, you know. Out in the country they throw stones at us and put broken bottles in the road, and in town we bowl 'em over!"

She leaned toward Louise as she spoke, and gave her gloved hand a little squeeze. The street-lamp showed her beautiful face, animated with a dazzling smile. Louise felt the rush of her high gay spirits. In spite of all there was a great, sparkling fountain of life in her; she lived immensely.

Louise herself laughed indulgently. She was relieved. All along her mind had been oddly troubled over the incident of Fanny Trescott's appearance — or, rather, over the way Mrs. Penrose had taken it. In the case of another woman she

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might have explained this simply enough on the ground of solicitous motherhood, or on a social ground. But she was too well acquainted with Ted's social gregariousness and with Mrs. Penrose's catholicity to suppose the mother would be particularly disturbed merely because she had caught the son running around with a handsome dining-room girl. She herself would have thought nothing of seeing Ted with Fanny if it had not been that Mrs. Penrose's manner so powerfully suggested something back of it.

She was in that attitude toward Ted where certain things would have been a poignant grief to her. She told herself that Ted would tell her the story — if he had a story that would bear telling. So when he telephoned to her early the next afternoon, her heart lightened. And when he appeared before her, boyish, debonair, there was a secret sweetness in feeling that he was just what she had believed him to be. She asked him plumply how he came to be with Fanny, and he told her the whole circumstance with his usual frankness. It was even better than she had thought. She had never been fonder of him.

This was a Saturday, and Mrs. Titus was giving a repetition of her horseshow — more particularly for farmers and the proletariate. Ted's telephone message had proposed that mild diversion, and he had driven over for her in a runabout. It was a splendid, crisp autumn day. Her mood expanded and mellowed. They tacitly forgot the horseshow

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and drove across the river. The country roadside was strewn with maple leaves, but the trees were still rich with them. Some still vistas, where the overhanging leafage was shot with sunshine, and dust-particles, arising from the empty road, glinted in the light, seemed made of gold. The rolling country had yielded its fruit and grain and rested peacefully. The man and woman felt near to each other.

They went back to the horseshow finally, and entered; but it was nearly over. People were already leaving. They encountered David Donovan there. It was Ted, rather than Louise, who, in a happy hospitality, took him into their company. David did not please her then. She had thought about him too much and too troublously of late. He did not fit the day. It was good sometimes to dream, with a well-liked, perfectly tractable friend at one's side and nothing to disturb one's peace.

Still, coming out of the show, it was her impulse which proposed that they walk, which permitted David to continue of the party. She surrendered her jacket to Ted and her spirit was more with him than with the other as they strolled leisurely on, in a mood where what anybody said made no particular difference. She paused, without explanation, to take in a view up the pleasant valley. This same tranquillity to which she now wilfully gave herself seemed to lie up there. In an idling, half-formless way she was thinking, "Why not live with it?"

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A line of Omar's came into her head. She smiled, for her abstraction, at Ted, then at David, and they started on leisurely. They had taken a little-frequented, badly paved street halfway up the ascent that led from the shelf of bottom land along the river bank to the boulevard on the brow of the bluff. Just ahead of them lay an intersecting street, also not much used because the grade was too steep for comfort and the cobblestone pavement, designed to give horses a better footing for the stiff up-pull, was rough and broken. Glancing upward she happened to see a big cherry-colored car flash by on the boulevard. She thought it was the machine they had gone to the horseshow in, and was about to comment on it, when they all heard a shout, which was taken up, repeated, cut with a scream. A pair of powerful horses drawing a heavy farm wagon shot into view at the head of the street and plunged down its stony steep in a runaway. They were fairly at the street corner then. They saw the farmer tugging bravely but uselessly at the lines and a child clinging to his arm. It looked like death.

The picture that hung in Louise's paralyzed mind then showed these lightning-like motions: Teddie, with an ashen face and wide, staring eyes that held the soul of fear, thrusting her jacket into her hands and starting forward; David springing after him, catching his arm at the curb and pulling him violently back; holding him firmly while the runaway hurtled thunderously by. She drew breath as she realized

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that the driver had managed to avoid a hole in the pavement. The breath still trembled on her lips when one horse fell, horribly; the wagon swerved and crashed against the curb; man and child shot out of the wreck. The flying shutters that revealed the picture in her brain slowed their motion. People were running from all sides. David trotted forward. Her numbed faculties resumed their functions. She was seeing now and understanding. A mangled horse lay in the road. She sank against the low stone wall that held the terrace of the hillside lot and put her hands over her face. When she looked up, Teddie was sitting on the curb, his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands. She was sick all over, and vaguely struggled against the assailing faintness. The people about the wreck, now grown to a craning crowd that quite filled the street, were clamoring. Two policemen had come up. A minute later David came slowly and soberly up the steep street.

"What it is, Davy? Are they hurt?" she moaned.

"Pretty bad, Lou," he said, low and gravely.

"The little boy?" Her voice broke in a sob.

"Bad. Pretty bad," he replied in the same low, grave way; and he added, even lower, "His head, you know."

Her body writhed with the intolerable torment of her sympathy. She hardly knew that, standing over her, he reached his cool, muscular hands and she clung to them.

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"Davy! Couldn't you have done anything?" she wailed, and again sobbed aloud.

"There wasn't a chance in the world, dear," he said simply. "Not on that grade, with that team and wagon. No man could do it."

She knew he spoke the truth, and bent her head over her hands — and his.

"Everything is being done, Loie. Shan't I send for a cab?" he said, as one comforting a child.

She waited a moment, pulling herself together. "No, I'll walk," she said weakly; and got to her feet, helping herself by his hand. His other hand touched her waist lightly, supportingly. She swayed a little to him, and righted herself.

Then, for the first time, they were aware of Teddie, standing in the gutter, ghostly white, looking at them.

"Come on, old man," said David. They went very slowly up the street, still living in the heart of the tragedy. When they came out on the boulevard, David looked back, down the steep and stony course the wagon had taken.

"He made a good fight," he said. "He got them past that hole. He made the best fight he knew."

Both of them comprehended that he was hardly speaking to them, nor exactly to himself; but rather more to the spirit of that other man and of all men who went down making the best fight they knew.

Meanings of the picture were coming in upon Louise's mind. She knew that Teddie had been

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mortally afraid. A romantic concept of chivalry — perhaps a pang of that odd jealousy, lest David should go first before her eyes — had sent him forward. In this abrupt intrusion of the elements of life and death, at the end of her dreaming day, David had been the competent actor. She had a strange feeling that if the gallant farmer could choose, it would be David's sympathy that he would value most, although David had prevented Ted from trying to stop the horses.

Teddie's brain, also, was helplessly appraising the drama. At the further side of the boulevard he halted, with a wan smile.

"Davy will get you home," he said. "I'll take a street-car."

She wished to prevent it; to make him feel that he had an assured place at her side. But he had seen her clinging to David's hands — the same hands that had held him back from useless destruction. She said nothing; but walked on with David.

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CHAPTER XI

THE runaway received due attention at the hands of Julius Brown's *Daily News*, which commented solemnly upon the recklessness of some owners of automobiles. Julius was disappointed, however. He heard that Frederick Hasbrook was in the car, and purposed printing his picture with appropriate headlines. But investigation showed the report of Frederick's presence was false. Julius rather needed a chance to insult Frederick just then, for another enterprise had turned out badly. He explained it to Old Alphabet.

"Rexford located Doane all right," said the editor, "and got that letter from him." He nodded to a missive that lay upon the editorial table at the lawyer's hand, — the same that Doane had stolen from Fanny. "Of course, Doane himself couldn't do anything about it, for Fanny Trescott would be leery of him. With Doane's help your able sleuth located the older sister — the wife of Doane's bosom. He offered her two hundred dollars and expenses if she'd land the other letters. The loving sister got Fanny up here and was going to dope her and take the letters; but Fanny slipped away."

"Which was not sisterly," said Old Alphabet.

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He had a certain humorous appreciation of the matter. "The letter is certainly in Freddy's hand." He picked up the old love letter, and laughed amusedly at one of its ardent phrases.

"Wesley Wogan was up to see me the other day," the editor observed with a discursive interest. "It seems Mrs. Doane thought she could get Fanny to show Wesley the letters and had offered him a ten to swipe them for her. I suppose she told him about Rexford being in it and Wogan figured I was behind Rexford. Anyhow, he wanted me to give him the job of getting the letters."

"I didn't know Wesley'd been as sober as that of late," said Codley, amiably.

"He's a mighty smart fellow," the editor commented. "Of course, he's an awful booze-fighter."

The lawyer drummed thoughtfully. "I might have a talk with him, if nothing else turns up," he said incidentally; "I think we'll have friend Dennis in a reasonable frame of mind before long. If not, we'll have him in bankruptcy. There's so much money at stake that we've simply expunged the word 'fail' from our bright lexicon. But I want, Julius," he added with an exceeding quietness, "I want very much to land Freddy right. And we don't, so far, turn up anything very promising."

"That's so," the editor assented, and looked grave.

"Well, we'll keep on trying," said Old Alphabet. "We'll keep on trying. With patience, Julius,

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there isn't much that you can't do. We will keep on trying."

Mr. Codley's patience was even then about to undergo a severe trial from a derangement of his plans which originated in an unexpected quarter. Within a week after his conference with Julius — it was the night before Thanksgiving — the blow fell.

David spent the evening at the Hasbrook place, Louise being there. She had been staying there several days. Frederick's comprehensive legal attack upon the distillers was progressing. It more and more absorbed her. She could not keep her impatient fingers out of it. She had put in three days digesting a comparative showing of alcohol prices. Very likely Hammond, Frederick's secretary, or some other equally available person could have done it better; but she would not be denied. The idea that she was helping in the good fight gave her happiness. The happiness made her serene. Besides, since the day of the horseshow, her attitude toward David had passed to a new phase. She did not wish to contend with him just now. She waited, hoping.

At parting from him that evening before Thanksgiving, she said, "Dennis has turned over all the evidence he will, hasn't he?"

"I suppose he can't go much further that way," he replied. He understood the quiet hint that his

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usefulness to Dennis in a capacity which was also useful to Frederick, and, therefore, more or less justifiable, was nearly at an end. The time was coming when he must elect to be of Dennis O'Neill's camp or of her camp. "You see," he explained unhappily, "they're pushing the old man pretty hard, Loie. He's a good deal in debt and they're fighting him on every corner. He even thinks they wouldn't hesitate to blow him up or hit him over the head. I don't think that; but it is a kind of life-and-death fight for him." He meant, How could he turn his back on the good old grafter in such straits? But he did not say it; and she said nothing. Just now she did not wish to contend with him. She waited, hoping.

It rather dashed him as he went out; but his spirits recovered. He, too, waited, with a great hope. Loie couldn't, at present, see it just right; wouldn't admit that all the good wasn't on one side and all the bad on the other. She allowed nothing for old Dennis's warm heart. She refused to confess — what she must know — that the old grafter and corrupt politician was a much lovelier person than Epperson, with his cocaine and cheap whiskey on one hand and his bigotry on the other. But she, too, had a warm heart.

He chose to walk, for it was clear and cold. The stars shone with the brilliance of a winter night. An arc street-lamp ahead made a dazzlingly white blur in the lower dark and sharply revealed the

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bare black branches of the near-by trees. Passing the Penrose house he noticed that it was again dark and deserted. The mass of its shadows indefinitely pleased him, like the stars, the bare trees, and the vigorous motion of his own limbs. It seemed an excellent world. In this harmony he entered the hotel and happened to notice, as he stepped over to the elevator, that it was ten minutes past eleven. In his own room he had turned up the lights and thrown off his hat when the telephone began ringing. His gay "Hello!" was answered by Dennis O'Neill's voice:—

"That you, Davy? I been trying to find you this twenty minutes. Both my watchmen are dead drunk. I think they've been doped. I'm alone at the plant. I want you, lad."

"Drunk?" David repeated.

"Laid out stiff in Krauss's back room. I always come down and take a look around before I go to bed. I'm thinking there's going to be something doing the night, Davy. I want you." The old man's heavy voice showed uneasiness.

"I'll be there," said David.

There was no doubt in his mind as to what he should do. Before he caught up his hat he turned to the desk and opened a lower drawer. A revolver lay there. He looked to see that it was loaded and was putting it into his overcoat pocket; but paused, regarded the murderous implement an instant, and put it back in the drawer. Someway he was thinking of Louise.

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Louise herself looked at the tranquil night from her chamber window before she went to bed. To her, also, it seemed a good world; and in the morning she wilfully gave herself over to the day — Thanksgiving, the home festival, the feast of the turkey. Kittie, of course, was to be the hostess. The Hasbrooks were coming. Leaving the house directly after breakfast, Louise warned them to be early. She was to be an assistant priestess, an initiate of the rites. At Winthrop's house she rolled up her sleeves and put on one of Martha's huge gingham aprons.

It was a little past noon when the three toiling votaries in the kitchen heard the men enter.

Kittie stepped into the hall and shook a floury fist at them. "How dare you come so early? You won't stand the ghost of a show against us unless you get up more appetite. Go back and run around the block!"

Louise, behind her, brandished a big iron spoon. But even then she noticed that David was not with them, and that Hammond, Frederick's secretary, was. Frederick called back, "Come see the fireworks," and held up a round quart bottle filled with a thick, whitish liquid. Winthrop seemed solemn and absorbed.

Wondering, the two women followed the men into the study. Frederick threw up the window, took a sheet of writing paper from the desk, and spread it on the sill. Then he uncorked the bottle and poured a little of the whitish stuff on the paper. It spread

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slowly; then suddenly burst into a fierce blue flame. They watched it burn viciously. Frederick shoved the paper outside and closed the sash. "Phosphorus," he said. "We'll have it analyzed." He set the bottle on the desk.

"The great point," said Winthrop, "is to keep the fellow hid and get a confession out of him."

"I think he will be kept close enough where he is," Frederick replied.

"But what is it?" Kittie exclaimed.

"An attempt to burn Dennis O'Neill's distillery," Frederick explained. "His two watchmen were given drugged liquor last night. Two men broke into the plant about one o'clock. Each had a bottle of this stuff, one had bit and auger. A hole bored in a tank full of spirits, and these bottles emptied on the floor some distance away; would make a very good time fuse. Five minutes after the leaking spirits reached the fire the plant would be a wreck. The men seem to have crawled in through a chute to the cattle-sheds. At any rate they came across Dennis up there and promptly knocked him senseless with a slung-shot. But Davy was there."

"Davy?" Kittie murmured.

"Dennis had telephoned for him when he found the watchmen drugged. I suppose he had a sharp tussle with the men. One of them got away. He captured the other. This is a state secret, you understand."

"But where is Davy?" Kittie insisted.

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"Why, the other bottle of this infernal stuff was broken in the scuffle. Davy got into it a bit. One hand and arm are burned some. We couldn't persuade him to come along, with his bandaged arm and his laurels."

The Senator chuckled softly. "David is a shabby hero — after the event. He seems quite downhearted about the laurels. He said one disabled slugger wouldn't be missed."

It occurred to Louise — not because he spoke to her, but because he seemed to take care to look away from her — that the sharp old Senator suspected something.

"I won't have it!" Kittie declared. "I'll go for him myself!"

"I'll go," said Louise.

The Senator looked at her then, with a benevolent smile. She heard Kittie saying, "Call a cab, Winthrop."

She went into the kitchen to take off her apron, whither Kittie followed her. "It's room three hundred twenty, Lou. Don't let him get away. He's a mule for stubbornness," she cautioned.

Up to the time she climbed the broad steps that led to the hotel door, Louise had not even thought of proceeding in any but a conventional manner — by going to the parlor and sending up her card. It's room three hundred twenty, Kittie had said, and this innocent numeral seemed suddenly to take possession of her. She walked calmly across the

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office, entered the elevator, and asked for the third floor. In the same way she went down the corridor, looking at the numbers on the doors. It was only when the number she sought confronted her that her heart began to beat up, and her nerves to flutter. She thought, vaguely, "I'll say Kittie sent me"; and the sisterly wing rather comforted her. She knocked on the door.

"Come," said David's voice within.

She waited an instant, confused, uncertain, and knocked again.

"Come in," David's voice called more peremptorily.

Her own odd, foolish, schoolgirl embarrassment confused her the more. She turned, ready to flee to the office and send up a card. But those in the office had already seen her come upstairs. With a desperate resolution she opened the door.

It was half a sitting room, half an office. David sat in a leather-covered chair over by the desk, looking impatiently at the door. His left hand and arm were bandaged. He sprang up in a kind of panic. It came to her then that in crossing his threshold she had burned some bridges; and he looked actually afraid of her. That look of down-right fear stilled her own nerves, lifted her up, gave her joy. She laughed, low and sweet.

"You can't get away, Davy! I've come for you!"

In a sort of panicky awkwardness, like an acutely self-conscious boy, he fumbled at an excuse.

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"I'm not very presentable — with these bandages."

"Oh! Are you getting vain?"

She had gone near to him. He looked down into her sweet, laughing eyes.

"I suppose I must be." He did not know exactly what he was saying.

"You'll have no reason to be if you keep Kittie's dinner waiting." For her, also, what was said did not matter. The words were so many poor little screens, blindly thrown out as though they could hide the emotions.

The male, prosecuting his siege with desperate valor, sees a sudden weakness, a sign of surrender, and is overwhelmed with fear at his own fortune. The woman grows brave, steps out and claims her own. Both of them understood that something like this had happened, and set up a thrilling tumult in their hearts. What they said, at the moment, did not matter. The place was half public, for the hall door was open. She gave him a lift as he got one-sidedly into his overcoat. They went down and out to the waiting cab.

"It wasn't what you wanted, Loie," he began, without prelude, when the cab started. "I wanted, very much, to have everything — what you wanted."

"His life was in danger," she replied. "There's no politics in that. Did you think — really — I'd charge it up against you?" His fear of her judgment made her singularly tender. She was alive

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to a certain physical sense of him — his bulk and fighting thews. Still he feared her!

"I wanted everything to be as you wanted," he repeated.

"It was a good fight!" she answered, low. Then she colored — half aware of the aboriginal, unregenerate female in her that loved the male for his strength and courage and skill at combat. "Tell me about it — just what happened!"

He told her how he had gone to the distillery; he and Dennis had separated for a tour of the plant; he had heard the sound of the intruders; stalked them and attacked them.

"It should have been simple enough, you see," he explained. "I knocked one of them down. The other had a slung-shot. The bottle broke and that stuff took fire. Of course, if anything was to be done, there was no time to lose. So I cracked his head with the big bolt I'd picked up and smothered the fire with my overcoat."

It was not at all dramatic as he told it. But now she wished to keep him to this story. In a rather mysterious way she was taking shelter behind her fortifications again. "Is the man much hurt?" she asked, as soon as his voice ceased.

"Yes," he answered soberly; and turned his head to look into her face. "I hit him harder than I needed to. I was in a kind of rage against it all, Loie. Slugging a man in old Dennis's distillery — it was so far from what had been in my mind when

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I left you a little while before. I've been mixed up in a good many coarse kind of things, you see. When I left you, Loie, I seemed to see it was going to be rather different in the future — more as you would wish it to be. But there I was slugging a man in Dennis's distillery. I hit him harder than I needed to. The doctor doesn't say so, but I have an idea he may die. You won't like that."

Her throat contracted in a little spasm and her breath stopped. A man to die at his hands! She recoiled from it, and trembled. She put forth all her courage and, so to speak, dragged herself bodily up to the mark. Her wide eyes scarcely saw him, but her hand reached out and found his.

"You were within the law and the right. It was necessary — to attack him. Don't think I'll charge it against you — if he dies." In spite of herself her voice weakened. "He will not die," she said. "Wait. He will not die."

The cab stopped before Winthrop's place where the Thanksgiving dinner awaited. They were somewhat pale when they entered.

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CHAPTER XII

FOR three days the town had been valiantly digging itself out of the snow which the soft gray clouds shook down persistently. The snow-ploughs of the street railroad were continually in commission, nosing through the white blanket and piling up woolly breastworks at either curb. Squads of the company's workmen and of city street-cleaners attacked the drifts, loading wagon after wagon to be hauled to the river and dumped. In the business district janitors and bare-headed, goose-pimpled clerks sallied out with long-handled brooms to clear the watery flagging. Still the snow fell, and nobody cared. Throngs of shoppers tramped through the slush. A caravan of umbrellas bobbed around the chief corners. Store windows were piled mountainously with bright-colored goods. The soberest shops took on the air of a fair. Troops of children — they seemed almost to come down with the snow — ranged the streets and flattened their noses unchecked against the plate-glass windows. Christmas was at hand.

The afternoon of the third day, Louise walked up Broadway. It was getting dark and turning colder; but she did not mind the snow. It powdered her

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fur coat, made little ermine epaulettes on her shoulders, and covered the top of her cap. She felt an exquisite pleasure in its fall, and smiled a little when, now and then, an eddy of the rising wind drove a handful of cold flakes full in her unprotected face. Everybody seemed seized with a panic to get home. The platforms of the street-cars bulged with passengers who, in turn, bulged with bundles. Men burst from shop doors, parcel-laden, plunged into the street, and raced after a slowly retreating car, to which they were helped with volleys of jokes. Men on the cars shouted greetings to those on the flagging. A stout, elderly man with his short arms full pressed for a place on a crowded car-platform. A cry went up: —

"Why, here's Santy himself!"

Louise stopped on the curb and watched them drag the fat man, with several almost fatal slippings of his luggage, to the car. A man sang out: —

"One thing's sure! Davy Donovan's stocking's full to-night. It's a rod long, too!"

At the name a big, warm wave ingulfed her heart, leaving her breathless with an excess of joy. Taking the occasion of some business, David had gone to New York the day after Thanksgiving. "Wait!" she had said, and he had thought it more endurable to be away until they should know definitely whether the man whose head he had cracked was going to recover. She could forgive him the lawful blow — but what then? "He will not die," she had said —

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as though he must not. Now, Dolton, the injured man, was definitely out of danger — and David had returned this day.

She walked on leisurely. The enchantment of the air grew a little stronger, a little more heady. Quite as though it was something she had meant to do — although the idea occurred to her only at the instant of acting — she turned into the first store. There were nine dollars in her purse, and she wished to spend them all. The toy stock was depleted; but it did not matter. She took trains of cars, dolls, kitchens, utterly regardless of the bulk. When she got to Winthrop's back door, laden like a porter, she could only kick against it with her foot. Kittie herself opened the door and cried, "Oh, you goose!" As Kittie unloaded her arms they fell into helpless laughter.

All the same Louise's nerves were growing taut. As she approached the house a question that she could not drive away arose like a mist in her tropical day. She lingered, wishing Kittie to say a word. But Kittie was either too wilful or too busy with the dinner. The day was overcast when Louise went into the hall. Then she heard a man's voice in the living room and the bright, elevated, joyous peace returned. She went to her room. She did not at all care to see him now. He was below. That was sufficient.

For the early dinner there were Kittie's father, Sheriff Endicott and his wife and three children, and

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Mr. and Mrs. Dennis O'Neill — a strange gathering; but to-night politics did not count. Indeed, Dennis carried off the honors, with stories of early Christmases which he told with an irresistible humor.

David and Louise had not even spoken; but only smiled across the board. Presently the hostess bustled away and they heard sounds of a gathering in the next room. When the doors rolled open, they found themselves at the edge of an audience of children that filled the larger room. It was needless to ask whence they had come. The broken shoes, mittenless hands, and shabby Sunday-best told. The curtain across the bay window was pulled back, disclosing the burdened Christmas tree and David as Santa Claus.

After the gifts were distributed there were three charades, in which David and Louise took part. The men actors dressed in Winthrop's study, the women upstairs. Thus David and Louise met only in the hall or on the tiny stage. They brushed together, touched hands, spoke to each other — all about the business of the little charades. They were in that hour when each one knows, but the word has not been spoken. The brightly lighted room, the people crowding near them, even the strange clothes they wore for their parts, heightened that sense, thrilling in the heart of each, of living in a secret paradise to which none but the other had the key. This human stir about them was light as finest smoke against their powerful dream.

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Only one thing Louise really noticed, and that was Kittie sitting among the children, talking to one and another of them, looking at gifts that Santa Claus had brought. The show ended by nine o'clock. Louise stood in the hall with Kittie, watching the children troop away, laden and happy. She was in a charade costume, and Kittie accompanied her when she went upstairs to change it. In a sudden access of love, Louise put her arm around the smaller woman's waist.

"If Santa Claus came to town, honey, you'd be the very first person he would come to see," she said.

Kittie laughed. "Santa and I understand each other. He isn't very bright."

"It was so dear — those little children! Nobody but you could have done it just right — been one of them — made them the ones that were giving the party."

Kittie brushed her cheek against Louise's shoulder. "It was truly their party, dear. I was coaxing them to invite me, to take me into it, you see — for the sake of some one who will be here next Christmas if all goes well."

Louise's heart fluttered at the base of her throat. She stooped with awe and kissed her small sister-in-law. "I thought that, Kitten," she whispered. Suddenly her eyes were wet.

Kittie went down to her guests and Louise changed her clothes slowly. Her depths were astir, yearning

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with elemental power. Dressing mechanically her lips murmured, "Teach me to meet my life with the same great heart that little Kittie has." She did not know whether it was to Kittie's gods or her own that she prayed.

She went downstairs; David was in the hall. The moment she saw him she knew that for him, too, the hour was overfull; he could wait no longer. She came down the last steps steadily, her eyes fixed on his, her lips barely bent in a smile. An indirection, a touch of coquetry would have seemed abominable to her then. David met her at the foot of the stairs.

"Loie — it's Christmas — How I love you!" He spoke low, and half choked with an everlasting desire. His hands reached out. She blushed red, leaned against his breast, and took his kiss. Suddenly they were thrust back seven years. This was as it had been that Thanksgiving night after the big game when, a girl of seventeen, she had waited for him, uplifted, athrill, impatient. The troth they had plighted then was enduring.

It was only two minutes later that they went in where the others were and sat down side by side. Dennis was telling another story. In the silence that followed the laugh he looked around the room, twinkling with good-nature. The next moment he slyly pulled his wife's sleeve.

"I'm thinking Christmas is coming," he whispered, his shrewd little eyes upon the pair.

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"Man, it slipped in wit' a millun candle-power, thinkin' nobody'd see it, while ye was blarneyin' away wit' yer story," she whispered back. "We best be diggin' out. Santa's nervous in company."

Perhaps the same sentiment stole to the others. At any rate the guests departed early. Not long after their going Louise was left to see David to the door alone. In the hall they said again the words that mean much to two, nothing to a third. He should go; but he lingered.

Her fingers traced the edge of his coat lapel. She opened her arms and laid them around his neck, looking up into his face with a mighty and tender pride of possession and surrender.

"Davy?" In the little questioning lilt her murmurous voice sang the name caressingly. "You stand all — every bit — on our side now? Not any on Dennis O'Neill's side?"

He understood her. His joy-drunken eyes smiled a little. Half by way of teasing her he said: "You know they're driving the old man pretty hard now — paying him for having given Fred that evidence against them. They've taken most of his trade and are crippling his credit."

She simply looked up at him, grave and sweet and silent, neither retracting nor renewing her plea. She had asked. That was all.

His eyes drank in her steady gaze, the slightly parted red of her lips, the tender curve of her chin. He thought, with such a shock of delight as made his

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heart tremble, "Ah, how she can pay!" That he should hesitate at anything she asked seemed incredible.

"All, every bit, on your side, honey! Set me a task! Say what you want!" Holding her tight in his arms there was not room enough in the world to think of anything but her.

She rested her head on his shoulder. "Just that, dearest. Just that," she murmured with an infinite content.

He went out drunken with happiness, lifted above the state and stature of a man. He wished to catch up his life in his hand, as a boy takes a ball, and hurl it at some unknown goal, amid ranks of some unknown foe, to please her.

Louise forgot Kittie and Winthrop and the house she was in. She found herself in her room. As she lifted her hand to her throbbing throat to unfasten her gown, a certain suggestiveness of the act pierced her great dream. She understood that she had finally quite surrendered, definitely promised herself. Her breast labored. She was glad to her finger-tips. Then she realized, in the powerful march of her passion, that after so long, after so sharp scruples, after the stubbornly applied drag of her will, she had let in love like a flood; that it entered her life with an overwhelming, obliterating force.

It was scarcely necessary to tell Kittie. The little woman's eyes shone with the news at sight of Louise.

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Winthrop, also, knew. Indeed, it seemed that she herself had been almost the last to know the secret. Frederick Hasbrook patted her shoulder. The Senator chuckled and kissed her. The engagement was prosily announced, like any other.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE wedding itself was announced for the tenth of May; but not even that changed the face of a workaday world. The day following the announcement three men, in particular, found themselves as gloomy as though Hymen had gone out of business.

The three sat in the compartment of a Pullman car — Mr. Codley, Mr. Titus, president of the First National Bank of Sauganac, and Mr. Schwartz, president of the Three Kings Distillery of Nogiac. They were returning from New York, where they had attended a meeting of the principal distillers who were working to organize a trust of national scope. It had turned out disappointingly. The great Wall Street house which was to finance the venture and float the new securities had interposed a demand for delay.

"Those fellows are scared out of their wits," Schwartz commented, with something of bitterness and something of contempt, as he stared out of the window at the flying landscape. He was a small, spare man with a face so sharp that it seemed to have been whetted to a cutting edge. He was very nattily dressed. His red puff tie and large solitaire diamond ring suggested sporting proclivities. He

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wore his stiff black hair in a pompadour; but his most noticeable feature was a high, thin, strongly arched nose.

"There's a good deal of truth in what they say, Charlie," Titus observed thoughtfully. "There is a lot of socialism and anarchy loose in this country, and they don't want to stir up any more of it. Here's this blatherskite Sykes talking of running for governor, and the newspapers and politicians and all sorts of riff-raff howling against trusts and the money power and so on. We don't want a row any more than they do."

The banker was then forty-five, with a compact, well-made figure and a handsome face. He smiled easily, almost never lost his tranquillity, and was one of the most popular men in Sauganac. People said, "As good-natured as Johnny Titus." He was already bald over the front of his head. His pleasant, smiling face was lighted by a pair of large brown eyes, out of which now and then a strong and subtle spirit looked. He had, withal, a high reputation among men of affairs. He was not directly interested in the distilleries, but it was agreeable, both to Schwartz and the Wall Street house, that he should take a hand in the trust-making. Both of them respected his opinion and trusted him. "We won't lose anything, finally, by waiting a bit," he added amiably.

The Wall Street house, in fine, had laid down several conditions precedent to the flotation of

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the trust. They called them, in the mass, "house-cleaning." They did not propose to bring out the trust under conditions which would tend to provoke popular clamor. With regard to the Nogiac contingent they wanted to see if the Hasbrook attack, which had already attracted too much newspaper attention, couldn't be shut off. And they had heard something about a plot to burn Dennis O'Neill's distillery at Sauganac. They wanted that quietly interred. As Steinmetz had explained, they didn't want the newspapers calling the new securities "Murder Debentures," and "Arson, preferred."

"It's just as I told 'em," Schwartz broke out aggrievedly, after a moment's silence. "Allan Thomas is a drunken fool. He got up that crazy scheme to burn Dennis's distillery out of his own head. Lord! Do they think I'd have gone into an idiotic scheme of that kind — and with that lousy skate Dolton?"

"That's true, Charlie," the banker replied. "But you know well enough the newspapers and demagogues would use it for a club to attack the whole distillery trade with, just as much as though you had got it up yourself. That's exactly what Wall Street don't want — a popular hullabaloo and scandal. There ought to be some way to choke it off." He glanced at Codley, who had been unusually silent during the trip.

"It will be easy enough to get hold of Dolton," said the lawyer, quietly. "I told Herr Steinmetz

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so. Getting hold of Dolton means only two things — first, money enough to buy him over again; second, outwitting Mr. Prosecuting Attorney Holmes. If I can't do that, it will be some cold day when you can't raise a couple of thousand dollars for Dolton. You know, Charlie, we'd have moved in that direction long ago — only we judged a delay would have a useful moral influence on Thomas."

Dolton, the man who had taken part in the attempt to burn Dennis's plant and whom David had captured after cracking his head, had made a confession to Winthrop Holmes and Frederick Hasbrook, and had been kept in strict seclusion — first in a private hospital, latterly in the county jail. The confession said that Allan Thomas had hired him to burn the plant. Allan Thomas had inherited from his father a large interest in the Grand Mogul Distillery at Nogiac, but his feeble understanding and inebriate habits had not tended to make him in good standing with his fellow-distillers. Dolton's confession spelled penitentiary for him. Schwartz and Codley had deemed it wise to let the threat hang over his head until he consented to certain arrangements for putting his distillery stock in the hands of a trustee, which, while not depriving him of his income, would shut him out of participation in the management of the business.

"Well, I guess it's up to you, Codley," said Schwartz, still in the morose mood which the postponement of the trust flotation had induced.

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"It's up to me," said the lawyer, coolly. "Getting Dolton will be easy enough. Getting Freddy Hasbrook will be more difficult; but I always try to look on the bright side, and believe that wherever there's a will there's a way."

He was not in good humor himself. Schwartz's moroseness faintly suggested a certain unreasonable dissatisfaction with his eminent counsel. Frederick Hasbrook had unearthed a set of freight contracts which Codley had devised, the disclosure of which irritated their author. He sat loungingly in his chair, his head sunk on his breast, and looked out of the window with a rather sinister flicker in his eye.

"I don't imagine anybody's going to let ten or fifteen million dollars slip away," he said. It was the thought that lay at the back of all their minds — the immense profit which was in sight and which would be theirs when the trust was successfully floated. The heap of gold colored all their thoughts as they sat in the compartment, not saying much, while the train rushed on. It shone in the eyes of the banker and the distiller as they looked blankly out of the window.

The porter appeared in the door, beaming, brush in hand, and announced that Nogiac was just ahead.

"I'll go on to Sauganac," said Old Alphabet. "I've got a man to see there."

That train made the run from Nogiac to Sauganac in thirty minutes. Codley took a cab to the hotel; telephoned; then seated himself in his room by the

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window overlooking the small park. Little buds showed here and there on the maple trees, but Old Alphabet was not contemplating the processes of nature that afternoon. He had hardly dropped into the chair before his mind was back at its strong toil of web-spinning. He was so absorbed that the knock at the door was repeated before it roused him.

Julius Brown was at the door with another man to whom Old Alphabet extended a welcoming and bony hand, saying amiably, "How are you, Wesley?" At the same time his eyes shrewdly appraised the caller.

Wogan bore the scrutiny remarkably well. The marks of dissipation were still upon his red, swollen-looking, round face. There were heavy circles under his dark, intelligent eyes. But he wore a new, neat suit of clothes; his linen was clean. Above all, as Codley perceived, he was quite sober.

Some twelve years before Wesley Wogan had been a man in all Sauganac's eye. Even then it was well known that the brilliant young lawyer was not at all scrupulous; but that was considered as merely a part of his smartness. So able a man naturally would not shackle himself with the old conventions of common honesty. Then a granger member of the legislature, from up the state, had arisen in his place in the house and confessed that Wogan had paid him a bribe of four hundred dollars to vote for the schoolbook bill. The house, completely dominated by the machine, ordered an

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investigation which dragged along and was finally smothered. The schoolbook bill stood. But someway the picture of the foolish old farmer standing up in public, with broken voice, tears running down his bewhiskered face, confessing his sin, would not vanish. It was both tragic and grotesque; but the grotesqueness was what hurt Wogan. He might have withstood the fulminations of the preachers and the serious editors; but the cartoonists, comic paragraphers, and reporters blessed with a sense of humor could not let it alone. The old man had blubbered out, "I tuk the wages of shame f'um that sinful man!" After that the newspapers simply could not resist the temptation to call the lawyer "Sinful Wogan." Then, although the fact had been well known before, people began to say, with a different meaning, that he was a rascal. His practice and income declined. Honest clients withdrew from him, and for the dishonest the too-gross brand upon him destroyed his usefulness.

Six months before the schoolbook episode Wogan had married — under the spell of one of those ingulfing infatuations which sometimes befall men whose sensuality is heightened by real intellectual and imaginative power. His wife had a certain pouting-lipped, warm-eyed, babylike prettiness and was absolutely a fool. It was his crowning misfortune that her thimbleful of brains was infected by a social ambition. He wrecked his credit to build her a house on the boulevard, where she

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