

THE ROOT OF EVIL

BY
THOMAS DIXON



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PROLOGUE.

This remarkable tale, in which each character is sketched from life by a master hand, goes beneath the surface of modern society and lays bare the canker at the root. Like all Mr. Dixon's work, it is a tale of American life, essentially true in the picture it draws and done with a swinging power which brings its dramatic scenes home to us. The splendid strength of the tale lies in the conflict between James Stuart and Nan, in which love and greed of wealth struggle for mastery.

CHAPTER VI.

Despair.

TO the very dawn of Nan's wedding day Stuart had refused to give up hope. The little financier had sent him an invitation, and, worst of all, had called to ask that he act as his best man. He refused so curtly that Bivens was deeply wounded.

"But I say, Jim, that's all rot. I want you to stand by me. I've always taken as much of your friendship as you would give and been grateful for it. I don't make new friends easily. I want you, and you're just got to do it."

Stuart shook his head and firmly set his jaw. A grim temptation flashed through his imagination. If he should accept it might be the one thing which would prevent Nan's betrayal of her love at the altar. Might he not by the power of his personality, the hypnotic force of his yearning passion and will, stop the ceremony? In the moment of deathlike silence which should follow the minister's words asking if there were any cause known why these two should not be made one, might not a single movement of his body at that moment, a groan of pain, a sob, a cry of agony in a supreme act of his will, cause the white figure to reel and fall at his feet? It was possible. But it would be too cheap. It would be a worthless victory, a victory of the flesh without the spirit, and he refused to take the body without the soul.

With a frown he turned to Bivens: "It's no use talking, Cal. I've made up my mind. I won't do it."

"Well, if you won't you won't," the little man said with a sigh. "At least you'll come to the church. For God's sake, let me get a glimpse of one friendly face! I'll be scared to death. You know, I'm not used to this."

At last the bride came and the surprised choir moved slowly and solemnly down the aisles through a sea of eager faces as the great organ pealed forth the first bars of the wedding march from "Lohengrin."

Nan was leaning on the arm of a stranger he had never seen before, an uncle from the west. She was pale, deathly pale, and walked with a hesitating movement as though weak from illness. Suddenly his heart went out to her in a flood of pity and tenderness. He tried to make her feel this, but she passed without a glance. She had not seen him.

Stuart listened to the ceremony with a vague impersonal interest as if it were something going on in another world. A single question was burning itself into his brain—the price of a woman! "Have we all our price?" he asked, searching deep into his own soul. Something pathetic in the white face of the bride had touched the deepest sources of his being.

"Have I, too, my price, oh, boastful soul?" he cried. "Would I sell my honor for a million? No. For ten, fifty, a hundred millions? No—not in the market place, no—but would I sell by a compromise of principle in the secret conclave of my party—at a sale the world could never know—would I sell for the presidency of the republic? Or would I sell now to win this woman? Would I? If so, I should hold her blameless. Have all men and all women a price if we but name it? Answer! Answer!" And then from the depths of his being came the burning words:

"No! I swear it. No!"

He looked up with a start, wondering vaguely if the crowd had heard this cry. No; they were intent on the drama at the altar. The minister was saying:

"What God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

"God! Surely he didn't say 'God,'" Stuart brooded. "Does God, the august, mysterious, awful creator of the universe, work like this? Did not the God of heaven and earth give this woman to him beneath the sunny skies of the south while their souls sang for joy?"

They were moving again down the aisle, the organ throbbing the recessional from Mendelssohn. A wave of emotion swept the crowd inside, and they became a mob of vulgar, chattering, gossiping fools, swarming over the church as if it were the grand stand of a racecourse, without hesitation tearing down and stealing its decorations for souvenirs.

By a curious law of reaction all resentment and anger were gone, and only a great pity for Nan began to fill Stuart's heart.

That night Stuart entered one of the more dignified and serious theaters just off Broadway. The play was a serious effort by a brilliant young dramatist of the modern school of realism. In two minutes from the rising of the curtain the play had gripped him with relentless power. Slowly, remorseless as fate, he saw the purpose of the author unfold itself in a series of tense and terrible scenes. The comedy over which the crowd laughed with such contagious merriment was even more sinister than the serious parts. No matter what the situation—whether set to laughter, to terror or to tears—beneath it all throbbed one insistent question:

"Has the woman who sells herself for money a soul?"

With breathless interest he watched the cruel carving of her body into tiny pieces. Without sniffing, whining or apology, with arms bared and gleaming scalpel firmly gripped in a hand that never quivered once, the author dissected her. Always he could hear this white invisible figure bending over each scene talking to the audience in his quiet, terrible way.

"Well, if she has a soul we shall find it. Perhaps it's here."

With a firm, strong hand the last secret of muscle and nerve and bone was laid bare, and the white face looked into the eyes of the audience through a mist of tears.

refuse to believe it! She has a soul! She has a soul!"

Next day Stuart went to his office with his usual keyed to a higher pitch of power. He felt that he was on his mettle. The fight was not yet won, but this morning he was winning. He plunged into his work with tireless zeal. Everything he touched seemed illumined with a new light.

At the close of the day's work he was still conscious of an exhaustless pity which had found no adequate expression in his labor on his clients' cases. His mind wandered to the dark silent millions into whose world the doctor had led him that night—millions who have no voice in courts because they have no money to sustain a fight for the enforcement of justice. He had never thought about these people before. They were calling now for his help. Why? Because he had been endowed with powers of head and heart which they did not possess. The possession of these gifts carried a responsibility.

On reaching his club in Gramercy park he saw that the Primrose horse was closed. Nan's mother had gone with the bridal party on Bivens' big yacht for a cruise which would last through the summer. Somehow, for all his brave talk he didn't feel equal to the task of seeing that window of Nan's old home from his club. He was about to beat a retreat when he stopped abruptly and the lines of his mouth tightened.

"What's the use of being a coward? I've got to get used to it. I'd as well begin at once."

He deliberately took his seat on the little pillared balcony of the clubhouse and watched the darkened window through the gathering twilight. For the moment he gave up the fight—the devil had him by the throat. He let the tears come without protest. He was alone and the shadows were friendly.

He stepped inside, touched a bell and ordered a cocktail. He placed the glass on the little table by his side and looked at it. What an amusing act, this pouring of poison into the stomach to cure a malady of the soul! He smiled cynically and suddenly recalled something the doctor was fond of repeating.

"My boy, I'm rich so long as there are millions of people in the world poorer than I am."

Perhaps there was an antidote better than this poison. If he could lift the curtain for a single moment in another life more hopeless and wretched than his? It was worth trying.

He rose, left the liquor untouched and in a few minutes was treading his way through the throngs of the lower east side. When he reached the house on Washington square he found Harriet rattling in the library.

"Oh, Jim, dear! Where on earth have you been for nearly two days?" she cried. "I haven't seen you since the wedding!"

"Won't you sing for me?" he broke in. "All right!" She paused and suddenly clapped her hands. "I'll get my mandolin. You've never heard me play that, have you? I've learned 'Way Down on the Swanee River' on it. I know you'll like it."

Stuart listened to her, entranced. He had heard that old song of the



"Tell me what you are thinking about, Jim."

south a hundred times. But she was singing it tonight with a stange, new power. The girl leaned forward at last and laid her friendly hand on his. She had a trick of leaning forward like that when talking to him that had always amused Stuart.

"Tell me what you are thinking about, Jim," she said, a smile fitting around her tender, expressive eyes.

"I was seeing a vision, little pal," he began slowly, "the vision of a gala night of grand opera. Broadway blazed with light, and I was fighting my way through the throng at the entrance to hear a great singer whose voice had begun to thrill the world. At last, amid a hush of intense silence, she came before the footlights, saw and conquered. The crowd went mad with enthusiasm. I lifted my hat and waved it on high until she saw. A beautiful smile lighted her face, and straight over the heads of the people she blew me a kiss."

The tiniest frown clouded the girl's brow.

"Who was she, Jim?"

"Suppose I'm just a silly little homebody, who only wishes to be loved? How old do you think a girl must be to really and deeply and truly love, Jim?"

Stuart's brow contracted, and he took her hand in his, stroked it tenderly and studied the beautiful lines as they melted from the firmly shaped wrist into the rounded arm and gracefully molded body.

"I'm afraid you've asked a bigger question than I can answer, dear," he said, with serious accent. "I've been wondering lately whether the world hasn't lost the secret of happy mating and marrying. A more beautiful even life I have never seen than the one in the home of my childhood. Yet my mother was only fourteen and my father twenty-one when they were married. Now folks only allow themselves to marry in cold blood, calculating with accuracy their bank accounts. My mother had been married six months at your age, and yet here I sit on a pedestal and have the impudence to talk to you as a child!"

"But you're not impudent, Jim," she broke in eagerly, "and I understand."

"I'm beginning to wonder," Stuart continued, "whether nature made a mistake when she made woman as she is. I once knew a girl of fifteen to whom I believe life was the deepest tragedy or the highest joy of which her heart will ever be capable. Else why did the blood come and go so quickly in her cheeks?"

A sudden flush mantled Harriet's face, and she turned away that he might not see. Stuart's head bent low and rested between his hands.

"I loved such a little girl once, dear!"

Harriet's face suddenly flushed with joy. It was too wonderful to be true, but it was true! And he had chosen this curious way to tell her. Her voice sank to the softest whisper as she bent closer:

"And you love her still, Jim?"

His head drooped lower as he sighed: "I loved and lost her, little pal! She was married two days ago. She came to the great city, learned its ways and sold herself for gold."

The color had slowly returned to the little freckled face with its crown of golden hair, and the deep brown eyes overflowed with tears for just a moment. She brushed them away before he raised his head, so that he never knew.

"I'm so sorry, Jim," she said simply. "I understand now."

"It's very sweet to have you share this ugly secret of my life, little pal. It will help me."

"And you are sorry you ever knew her, Jim?"

"No, I'm not sorry. I've grown to see that there's just one thing in the world that's really big big as God is big the man who has attained a character. I haven't lived at all yet. I'm just beginning to see what it means to live. Until now I've thought only of myself. A new light has illumined the way. Now I'm going to live for others. From today I shall ask nothing for myself, and I can never be disappointed again."

Harriet looked up quickly. "Would it please you, Jim, if I should make a great singer?"

"More than I can tell you, dear. Your voice is a divine gift. I envy you its power."

Her eyes were shining with a great purpose. "I know that it means years and years of patient work, but I'll do it," she cried.

When the last echo of his footsteps in the hall above died away and his door had closed the little golden head bowed low in a passionate tender prayer:

"God help me to keep my secret and yet to love and help him always!"

(To Be Continued.)

Entertains Social Workers.

From Friday's Daily. The pleasant home of Mrs. E. C. Hill was the scene of a most delightful meeting of the Social Workers of the M. E. church yesterday afternoon. The ladies held a very interesting business session, after which the hours were while away in a most enjoyable social time. The hostess served very delicious refreshments, and at about the hour of 5 the ladies dispersed, declaring Mrs. Hill a most excellent entertainer.

Gard of Thanks.

We, the undersigned, take this method of expressing our most sincere thanks to the neighbors and friends for their expressions of sympathy in our hour of sorrow and grief in the death of our beloved wife and mother. Also for the beautiful floral tributes from the Columbian school, Order of Eagles, Degree of Honor, the machine shop boys, the Bauer garage and friends and neighbors. William Wynn and Children.

\$1.00 Per Plate was paid at a banquet to Henry Clay in New Orleans in 1842. Mightily costly for those with stomach trouble or indigestion. Today people everywhere use Dr. King's New Life Pills for these troubles, as well as liver, kidney and bowel disorders. Easy, safe, sure. Only 25c at F. G. Fricke & Co.

The Journal for typewriter supplies.

Local News

From Friday's Daily.

Miss Goldie Hale of Gresham, Neb., is in the city making a visit with her friend, Miss Adelia White, for a few days.

Henry Horn of Cedar Creek was in the city yesterday afternoon attending to some matters of business with the merchants.

George P. Meisinger of Cedar Creek was in the city today attending to some matters of business.

Henry Born was in the city this morning looking after some trading with the merchants for a few hours.

George Sheldon, the Lincoln capitalist, was in the city today attending to some matters of business.

Roy Casey of Bloomington, Illinois, is in the city for a short visit with his friend, Stanley Kuhns.

C. E. Tefft, the Weeping Water attorney, was in the city today attending to some business matters at the court house.

Mrs. Georgia Greamer, from near Murray, was in the city today attending to some matters of business for a few hours.

Emmons Richey returned this afternoon from St. Joseph, Missouri, where he had been attending to business matters for a few days.

Mrs. Fred Stewart, who has been visiting here with her parents, W. P. Cook and wife, has returned to her home in Atchison, Kansas.

Superintendent W. G. Brooks and wife arrived this morning from Caldwell, Idaho, and will take up their residence in this city at once.

Miss Mary Foster returned this afternoon from Lincoln, where she had been attending a meeting of the county superintendents of the state.

From Saturday's Daily. Byron Read, from south of this city, was in town today attending to some business matters.

Miss Lottie Kopiskie was a passenger this morning for the metropolis to spend the day seeing the sights.

L. A. Meisinger came in this afternoon from his farm and looked after some trading with the merchants.

Mrs. Jennie Ehlers came in this morning from Omaha to visit over Sunday with her parents, William Tuoy and wife.

Philip H. Meisinger drove in this morning from his home west of this city and attended to the week-end shopping.

S. O. Pitman of Murray was in the city last evening, coming up to attend a session of the Masonic lodge of this city.

Chris E. Metzger drove in today from his farm near Mynard and spent a few hours here looking after business matters.

Misses Edna and Mayola Propst came down this afternoon from Omaha to visit over Sunday with their parents at Mynard.

Miss Beulah Sans returned to her home near Murray last evening to visit over Sunday with her mother and take a rest from her school duties.

Alex Campbell of near Murray came up this morning from his home and was a passenger on No. 15 for Omaha to look after some business matters.

Homer Shrader drove up this morning from his home near Murray and was a passenger on No. 15 for the metropolis to look after business matters.

Harry Cummings of Seward is in the city, a guest at the H. N. Dovey home, having accompanied his friend, G. O. Dovey, home from the university for a visit over Sunday.

Thomas Salmon, wife and little son arrived this morning from Galesburg, Illinois, to attend the wedding of Miss Florence Dovey this evening and to visit with the parents of Mrs. Salmon, W. K. Fox and wife.

W. F. Gillespie, the whole-souled grain dealer of Mynard, was in the city today looking after business matters and visiting friends.

Visiting cards, invitations, programs, and all other kinds of fancy printing done at the Journal office.

Mrs. H. S. Hendricks came up this morning from the farm, south of this city, and spent the day looking after some trading at the stores.

Mrs. Georgia Greamer, Miss Vera Yardley and Miss Anna Rys were passengers this morning on No. 15 for Omaha, where they will visit for the day.

Chris Parkening came in this morning from his farm west of this city and attended to some matters of business, as well as visiting with his friends.

The finest mask ball of the season will be given Saturday evening, January 18, at the T. J. Sokol hall. Five big prizes will be given for costumes, and a royal good time assured all.

Mrs. John Hanson of Irwin, Iowa, who has been here visiting her parents, Frank Grauf and wife, of near Murray, departed this afternoon for her home. Her sister, Miss Amy Grauf, accompanied her home for a short visit.

Fine New Residence. From Friday's Daily.

Attorney William A. Robertson and wife have been very busy the last week getting their new home on North Sixth street in shape, and are almost ready to begin to enjoy the delights of the handsome house. Their new home is one of the neatest and prettiest little houses in the city and has been erected with a view of comfort, as well as beauty, and it certainly will make an ideal home.

Getting Along Nicely. From Friday's Daily.

Mrs. T. H. Pollock, who was taken to Immanuel hospital in Omaha the latter part of December, was compelled to undergo a second operation Wednesday, from the effects of which she is recovering nicely. The fact that she has come out from the effects of the operation so well will be the source of gratification to her friends here.

Frightful Polar Winds blow with terrific force at the far north and play havoc with the skin, causing red, rough or sore chapped hands and lips, that need Bucklen's Arnica Salve to heal them. It makes the skin soft and smooth. Unrivaled for cold-sores, also burns, boils, sores, ulcers, cuts, bruises and piles. Only 25 cents at F. G. Fricke & Co.

Eagles' Mask Ball. The annual Mask Ball under the auspices of the Order of Eagles, will be given at Coates' hall on Saturday evening, February 15. The popular M. W. A. orchestra will furnish the music.

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