



THE ROOT OF EVIL

BY THOMAS DIXON

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CHAPTER XII. Temptation.

WHEN Stuart had seated himself on a luxurious leather covered chair in the little sitting room he gazed into the flickering fire with a feeling of strange excitement.

He could hear Bivens giving orders to his employees about the removal of his millions to the vaults below. It would take hours to complete the task. He could hear the deep vibrant ring of the gold, as the men dumped it into bags.

As he listened to the curious sound he began dimly to realize that the foundations of his life and character were being undermined. There could be no mistake about it, although he had made some brave talk to Bivens' face as he stared at the daring display of his money.

He lifted his eyes from the fire and they rested on an exquisite miniature of Nan which had been painted just after her marriage. He forgot the ten black years of loneliness and struggle. He was standing before her again in all the pride and strength of those last days of passionate longing and bitter rebellion. His heart gave a throb of fierce protest against the fate that had robbed him of the one thing on earth he had ever really desired. He tried in vain to separate her from the struggle of character and principle he was fighting with Bivens.

When Bivens entered he found his tall figure bent low in the chair and a scowl on his face. The little black eyes sparkled with the certainty of victory. He knew the poison was at work and its wine had found the soul.

"Now, Jim, down to business! You can see that I have the cash. What I must have to do the big thing I've dreamed is a right hand man whom I can trust with my money, my body and my soul. He must be a man with brains and farseeing eyes. A man who will fight to the death and be loyal with every breath, who will work day and night, a man of iron nerve, iron muscle and a heart of steel. Come in with me, Jim, for all you're worth, with all your brain and will and personality, without a single reservation, and I'll give you a partnership of one-fourth interest in my annual income, and I'll guarantee that it shall never be less than a million a year."

Stuart sprang to his feet and stared at Bivens, gasping.

"You mean this—are you serious? I expected the offer of a generous salary, Cal, but this is simply stunning."

"I told you I'd make you a proposition so big and generous you couldn't get away from it. But mind you, I've the best reasons for making it. We are entering the last phase of a world struggle for financial supremacy. This country is to be the real center of modern power. We must become and will become quickly the economic masters of the world. When that happens somebody is going to be master here."

Bivens rose and paced back and forth a moment.

"Somebody's going to be master here, Jim," he repeated, "and it's not going to be a mob, the stupid, howling, slobbering thing that clutched at your throat that day in front of my bank."

"No."

"Nor will it be a clumsy soulless corporation called a 'trust,' either, a thing that can be badgered and hounded by every hungry, thieving politician who gets into office. The coming master of masters, the king of kings will be a man—a man on whose imperial word will hang the fate of empires. I met the king of America the other day in this parlor. He sent for me. You can bet I answered the call. He made me eat dirt and swear that I liked the taste of it. But I'll get even with him yet!"

Two livid spots suddenly appeared on the swarthy cheeks and he choked into silence for a moment, continuing:

"The world is waiting for its real master—not a multi-millionaire, but the coming billionaire. The king of kings is yet to come. If I had been ready in this parlor with the capital I have today I could have made a billion. With the power and experience I now have and one such man as you on whom I can depend I'd doubtless my fortune every year. That means that in five years I will be a billionaire, not only forty-two."

Billion dollars will double itself in seven years. At forty-two I'd be worth a billion. At forty-nine I'd have two billions. At fifty-eight I'd be worth four billions—and just old enough to really begin to do things."

"Give me one billion answerable to my will alone and I can rule this nation. Give me four billions and no king or emperor, president or parliament on this globe dare make peace or war without consulting me."

"How long could this republic stand if such a man should see fit to change its form? Even now our petty millionaires buy courts and legislatures, and the control of great cities. But the new king would know no limitations to this power. If Europe now cringes at the feet of our present millionaire king of Wall street, emperors beg his favor and princes wait at his door, what could the real ruler of the world do?"

Bivens' voice again sank into low, passionate whispers, while his black eyes again became two points of fierce gleaming light.

When the crucial moment came for Stuart's manhood to answer, the speech of brave denunciation died on his lips. At the door of this yellow empire, mightier than kings in purple robe, his conscience halted, hesitated and stammered. He found himself, in spite of honor and character, for the moment measuring himself with Bivens in the struggle for supremacy which would sooner or later come between them if he should enter such an alliance.

"You needn't rush your decision, Jim. Take your time. Think it over from every point of view. You're bound to accept in the end."

Stuart flushed and his hand trembled.

"It's no use in my quibbling, Cal. Your offer is a stirring one. It tempts me immensely. I feel the call of the old blood struggle in me. I'm beginning to see now that the world's battles are no longer fought with sword and gun."

"Take your time, Jim," Bivens broke in, rising. "In the meantime I've got to see more of you. Nan wants it, and I want it. The politicians have turned you down, but the big men who count are afraid of you and they'll no out of their way to meet you. Come up to dinner with us tonight. I want you to make my home your home whether you accept my offer or not."

Stuart hesitated.

"Really, Cal, I oughtn't to go to-night. I'm afraid I've let you take too much for granted. I've got to think this thing out alone. It's the biggest thing physically and morally I've ever been up against. I've got to be alone for awhile."

"Oh, nonsense, be alone as much as you like later. Nan insisted on my bringing you tonight, and you've got to come, to save me from trouble if nothing else. I've an engagement down town after dinner. You and Nan can talk over old times. I promise you faithfully that not a word of business shall be spoken."

Stuart felt the foundations of life slipping beneath his feet and yet he couldn't keep back the answer:

"All right, I'll come."

As Stuart dressed for the dinner that night he thought of Harriet with a pang. He had promised her to try to keep out of danger. But could she know or understand the struggle through which he was passing? He wondered vaguely why he had seen so little of her lately. She had become more and more absorbed in her music, and her manner had grown shy and embarrassed. Yet whenever he had resented it and stopped to lounge and chat and draw her out, she was always her old sweet self. The doctor, too, had avoided him of late, and he noticed that his clothes had begun to look shabby. He caught him hurrying from the house and laid his hand affectionately on his arm.

"These are tough times, doctor, and if you need any help you must let me know."

The older man's voice trembled as he replied:

"Thank you, my boy, that's a very unusual speech to hear these days. It renews my faith in the world."

"You're not in trouble?"

The doctor lifted his head gently.

"My troubles are so much lighter than those of the people I know I can't think of them. So many of my friends and patients have given up in this panic. So many have died for the lack of bread. I'll let you know if I'm in trouble myself."

He paused and pressed Stuart's hand.

"I'm glad you asked me. The sun will shine brighter today. I must hurry."

With a swing of his stalwart form and a generous wave of his hand he was gone.

The only changes I see merely add to your power—the worldly wisdom which marriage writes on every woman's face, a new strength, a warmth and fascination and a conscious joy at which I wonder and rage."

"Why wonder and rage?"

She drew him gently to a seat by her side, leaned forward and gazed smilingly at him.

"When I see you tonight in all this splendor, so insolently happy"—

Nan sprang to her feet, laughing.

"You are delicious tonight, Jim, and I'm so glad you are here. Come into the art gallery. It will take you days to see it; we'll just peep in tonight."

He followed her into a stately room packed with masterpieces of art. Stuart gazed a moment in rapture.

"You must spend days here, Jim. Now, honestly, with all your high-



"What a long time, Jim!"

browed ideals, wouldn't you like to own this?"

"No. Not if I had the wealth of Croesus."

"Why not?"

"It's a crime to rob the world of these masterpieces of genius. They should be the free inheritance and inspiration of all the children of men."

Nan gazed at Stuart in vague bewilderment and then a mischievous smile crept into the corners of her mouth.

"You're trying to throw dust in my eyes, but I can tell you what you are really thinking. You are really wondering why the wicked prosper."

"You are wrong," he replied slowly. "Why the wicked prosper has never worried me in the least. The first big religious idea I ever got hold of was that this is the best possible world God could have created—because it's free. Man must choose, otherwise his deeds have no meaning. A deed of mine is good merely because I have the power to do its opposite if I choose. In this free world, step by step, I can rise or fall through suffering and choosing."

"Oh, Jim," Nan broke in softly, "I've made you suffer horribly. You have the right to be hard and bitter."

He looked at Nan cautiously and began to study her every word and movement and weigh each accent. Did she mean what her words and tones implied? In a hundred little ways more eloquent than speech she had said to him tonight that the old love of the morning of life was still the one living thing. He put her to little tests to try the genuineness of her feeling. He threw off his restraint and led her back to the scenes of their youth. When dinner ended she was leaning close, her eyes misty with tears, and a faraway look in them that told of memories more vivid and alluring than all the splendors of her palace. Stuart drew a breath of conscious triumph, and his figure suddenly grew tense with a desperate resolution. But only for a moment.

He frowned, looked at his watch and rose abruptly.

"I must be going, Nan," he said with sudden coldness.

"Why, Jim," she protested, "it's only 10 o'clock. I won't hear of such a thing."

"Yes, I must," he persisted. "I've an important case tomorrow. I must watch tonight."

"You shall not go!" Nan cried. "I've waited nine years for this one evening's chat with you. Come into the music room, sit down and brood as long as you like. I've planned to charm you with an old accomplishment of mine tonight."

She led him to a rich couch, piled the pillows high, made him snug, drew a harp near the other end and began to tune its strings.

Stuart gazed at the paintings on the ceiling and in a moment was lost in visions of the future his excited fancy began to weave.

A voice whispered:

"Unless you are a coward, grasp the power that is yours by divine right of nature. Why should you walk while pygmies ride? Why should you lag behind the age in this fierce struggle for supremacy? The woman who sits before you is yours if you only dare to tear her from the man who holds her by the fiction of dying customs?"

He felt his heart throb as another voice within cried:

"Yet why should I, an heir to immortality, whose will can shape a world, why should I live a beast of prey with my hand against every man?"

The answer was the memory of dirty finger nails closing on his throat while a mob of howling fools surged over his body and cursed him for trying to save them from themselves. Again he heard a woman's voice as she held his head close, whispering:

"I've something to say to you, Jim!"

His lips tightened with sudden decision. The golden gates of the forbidden land swung open and his soul entered.

(To Be Continued.)

Local News

From Friday's Daily.

Carter Albin of Union came in this afternoon from Omaha, where he has been attending to matters of business.

Miss Esther Olson of Pacific Junction was in the city today for a few hours, looking after some business matters.

Mrs. Kate Remington came down last evening from Omaha to look after some matters of business in regard to the Woodman Circle.

A. W. Dameron, wife and children returned this morning to their home in Lincoln, after a short visit here with George Poissall and family.

Q. J. Dady of Mason City, Neb., who has been here looking after some business with Luke Wiles, the Red Polled cattle fancier, returned to his home this morning on No. 15.

Rev. J. H. Steger departed last evening over the Missouri Pacific for Dumfries, Iowa, where he will attend the funeral of Rev. G. Zimmerman, an old friend and a minister of the Lutheran church.

Mrs. Lepoldt returned to her home at La Platte this afternoon, after visiting here for a few days with the family of C. A. Marshall. Miss Gladys Marshall accompanied her home for a short visit.

County Treasurer W. K. Fox and wife returned this morning from Lincoln, where Mr. Fox has been attending the sessions of the County Treasurers' association in that city, while Mrs. Fox has been visiting relatives.

From Saturday's Daily.

E. D. Steime returned to his home in Lincoln this morning, after a short visit with friends in this city.

G. G. Meisinger came in this afternoon from his home, west of this city, to look after matters of business.

P. H. Meisinger was in the city today for a few hours looking after business matters among our merchants.

Henry Thierolf of Cedar Creek was in the city today for a few hours attending to some matters of business.

O. P. Newbranch and wife departed this afternoon for Omaha, where they will make their home for the future.

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

L. A. Meisinger drove in this morning and spent several hours here attending to some trading with the merchants.

William Puls, sr., drove in today from his farm near Murray and attended to business matters with the merchants.

John Cory returned last evening from Omaha, where he has been attending the meeting of the grand lodge of the Red Men.

E. J. Hennings braved the cold weather today and drove up from his home near Cedar Creek to look after the week-end shopping.

C. L. Graves, editor of the Union Ledger, was in the city last evening visiting with his numerous friends and attending to business matters.

Charles Mapes came in last evening from Verdon, Neb., where he is engaged in teaching school, and will visit here over Sunday at the home of B. J. Reynolds.

Prof. Frank J. Kolbaba departed this morning for Omaha, where he will attend to his class in music in that city. The professor has a great reputation as an instructor in violin in this part of the state and has a large class in the metropolis.

When ordering flour ask your grocer to send you a sack of Forest Rose Flour—the best flour.

Miss Blanche Robertson came down on No. 14 last evening from her school at Omaha and will spend Sunday here with her parents.

Frank Hiber came down from the Croighton School of Pharmacy last evening to visit over Sunday with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Hiber.

Herman Smith came up last evening from his home near Murray and visited here over night with relatives, going to Omaha this morning.

Miss Lillian White and her guest, Mrs. Andy Moore, of Burwell, were passengers this morning for Omaha, where they will take in the sights.

E. T. Grey of Fremont, Neb., who has been here visiting his daughter, Mrs. W. A. Robertson, for a few days, returned to his home this afternoon.

Ed Baumgart departed last evening on the Missouri Pacific for Sterling, Neb., where he will visit his brother, Fred, for a short time on his farm near that city.

Glenn Hull of Omaha was in the city today looking for a suitable location where he could secure furnished rooms. Mr. Hull expects to enter the employ of the Burlington.

Miss Marie Fitzgerald returned this afternoon from Pacific Junction, where she has been visiting since Thursday. Miss Helen Record accompanied her home and will visit here over Sunday.

SIX-YEAR TERM BILL UNAMENDED

Senate Defeats Every Effort to Alter Works' Measure.

POPULAR VOTE PLAN BEATEN.

Turned Down by Thirty-five to Thirty-two Ballots—Opponents of Constitutional Change Mustering Strength. Roosevelt Often Mentioned.

Washington, Feb. 1.—The senate defeated every attempt to amend the Works single six-year presidential term resolution. When a recess was taken it appeared certain that a final vote on the proposed constitutional amendment would be reached today and its opponents were mustering all possible strength to defeat it.

As the measure emerged from the fight in the senate it still provides for one term of six years for the chief executive and makes ineligible to reelection any persons who in the past had held the office by election or by succession. The closest votes of the day came on Senator Owen's amendment for a popular vote on president and vice president, defeated 35 to 32, and Senator Paynter's amendment to lengthen to six years the term of the president who might be in office when the constitutional amendment finally was ratified. This was defeated 36 to 29.

Present Company Not Excepted.

Proposals for two four-year terms and one four-year term, suggestions to modify the resolution so it would not affect Taft, Wilson or Roosevelt, and amendments to make it apply only to presidents elected after its ratification, were all defeated by large majorities.

Progressives and Republicans who declared themselves friendly to Colonel Roosevelt again led a fight against the entire resolution. The Progressives declared it was against American governmental principles to limit the right of the people to choose a president. Senator Crawford insisted it was aimed at Colonel Roosevelt.

Not Afraid of Despot.

"We are asking the American people to foreclose themselves of the right to call into the service the man of the hour during a crisis upon which the very destiny of the republic may be hanging," declared Senator Crawford. "We have no fear of a despot."

"No, we are not afraid of a despot," retorted Senator Williams, "neither was any other fool nation that ever existed until after they had got him."

The debate centered about the declaration by Senator Williams that unless such amendments were adopted as to make Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson eligible for another term the friends of Roosevelt and others might oppose ratification of the constitutional amendment by the states.

"Whatever might be the motives of those who oppose the amendment," Senator Williams said, "they would be able to say to the people:

"They are after one man's scalp; he received more than 2,000,000 votes of the American people and now they are trying to make him ineligible."

HOUSE PASSES CODE MEASURE

Sends Bill to Senate Revising the Statutes.

LIQUOR BILL TO LIE ON TABLE

Pearson Does Not Insist on House Members Going on Record on Measure—No Objections Heard From Any Side to This Action.

Lincoln, Feb. 1.—The house passed house roll No. 1, which provides for the adoption of the code as revised by a special commission.

The house will be turned over to the advocates of woman suffrage on the evening of Feb. 3, at which time Dr. Anna Shaw will speak.

Representative Pearson of Frontier has concluded he does not desire to kill off all liquor legislation this early in the game, especially with several more bills almost ready for introduction from Omaha, so he asked that his resolution continue to sleep on the table in the house, and there it sleeps.

He introduced a resolution several days ago asking that all bills making any reference to the liquor laws be indefinitely postponed. The house put the matter over for debate and consideration, but the timely motion by Pearson saved anyone going on record, and the liquor amendment bills will take their regular course.

Direct Election Bill Reported.

The proposal to ratify the federal constitutional amendment for direct election of United States senators was reported to the house. Immediate passage of the measure is favored by many of the members.

Several petitions on the subject of legislative action on Sunday baseball were read in the house. Organizations and individuals, both for and against the proposed measure, were heard from.

A bill to repeal a law passed two years ago providing that grain tests should be made from a vertical section through a bin or crib in buying and selling grain was killed by a vote of the house.

PLACEK FOR SCHOOL INQUIRY

Saunders Senator Seeks Investigation of Kearney Institution.

Lincoln, Feb. 1.—Five bills were made into laws in the senate.

A communication from the legislative reference bureau was read asking that that institution be furnished twenty-five copies of all bills introduced, in order that they might exchange with other legislatures in session. Their request was granted.

Placek of Saunders sent up a resolution calling attention to the deficit in the treasury of the boys' industrial school at Kearney and asked that a committee of three be appointed to make an investigation into the affairs of that institution. Under the rules the resolution went over for a day.

There will be a special hearing before the judiciary committee on next Wednesday evening in the senate committee, for the purpose of taking up the employers' liability compensation matters.

Smith's bill to repeal the law which declared war on prairie dogs and gophers was fished out of the third reading pile and was passed.

FREE RIDES FOR OFFICIALS

Representative Foster of Douglas County Introduces Measure.

Lincoln, Feb. 1.—Representative Foster of Douglas county introduced a bill providing that all state officers and supreme and district court judges, except lieutenant governor, shall be entitled to ride free upon trains when traveling on state business. They are required to carry a card signed by the secretary of state which shall be honored by conductors.

McKisick of Gage introduced a bill appropriating \$15,000 for an exhibit at the San Francisco exposition, the governor to appoint a commission of three members to serve without pay.

46 Farmers' Institutes This Month.

Lincoln, Feb. 1.—Farmers' institutes and short courses will be held at forty-six points this month, with a total of eighty-four days' work. There will be three schools of agriculture, lasting a week, average five days each week. There also will be meetings held in four country school houses in the North Platte valley and one meeting held in a country church.

Edgar to Elect Postmaster Feb. 8.

Edgar, Neb., Feb. 1.—A primary has been called, to be held here Feb. 8, for the purpose of electing a postmaster for Edgar. The time of J. J. Walley expired June 15, and though several have sent in petitions asking for the appointment, none has yet been made. The Democrats have now taken it up and propose to elect a postmaster by the patrons of the office.

Five Wolves Killed.

Fairbury, Neb., Feb. 1.—A big wolf hunt, covering an area of six square miles north of Fairbury, furnished entertainment for 500 farmers. Five large prairie wolves were killed. They were then sold at auction and brought \$2 each. It is estimated that at least fifty prairie wolves have been killed in various parts of the county this month.