

THE ROOT OF EVIL

BY
THOMAS DIXON



Copyright, 1911, by Thomas Dixon

CHAPTER XVI.

The Last Illusion.

THE longer Dr. Woodman watched the barbaric, sensual display of wealth sweeping before him, the deeper his spirits sank. The butler touched his arm, and he turned with a sudden start.

"Mr. Bivens will be pleased to see you in the little library, sir, if you will come at once."

When the doctor was ushered into the library Bivens, who was awaiting him alone, sprang to his feet with a look of blank amazement, and then a smile began to play about his hard mouth.

"My servant announced that a gentleman wished to speak to me a moment. Will you be good enough to tell me what you are doing in this house tonight?"

The doctor paused and hesitated, his face scarlet from the deliberate insult.

"I must really ask your pardon, Mr. Bivens, for my apparent intrusion. It is only apparent. I came with my daughter. She sang tonight on your program."

"Oh, I see, with the other hired singers. Well, what do you want?"

"Only a few minutes of your time on a matter of great importance."

"I don't care to discuss business here tonight, Woodman," Bivens broke in abruptly. "Come to my office."

"I have been there three or four times," the doctor went on hurriedly, "and wrote you twice. I felt sure that my letters had not reached you. I hoped for the chance of a moment tonight to lay my case before you."

"All right, I'll give you five minutes."

"I felt sure you had not seen my letters."

"I'll ease your mind on that question. I did see them both. You got my answer?"

"That's just it. I didn't. And I couldn't understand it."

"Oh, I see!" Bivens' mouth quivered with the slightest sneer. "Perhaps it was lost in transit?"

The sneer was lost on the doctor. He was too intent on his purpose.

"I know. It was a mistake. I see it now, and I'm perfectly willing to pay for that mistake by accepting even half of your last proposition."

Bivens laughed cynically.

"This might be serious, Woodman, if it wasn't funny. But you had as well know once and for all that I owe you nothing. Your suit has been lost. Your appeal has been forfeited. My answer is brief, but to the point—not one cent. My generosity is for my friends—not my enemies."

"But we are not enemies personally," the doctor explained good naturedly. "I have put all bitterness out of my heart and come tonight to ask that bygones be bygones. You know that in God's great book of accounts you are my debtor."

"I owe you nothing."

In every accent of the financier's voice the man before him felt the deadly merciless hatred whose fires had been smoldering for years.

The doctor's voice was full of tenderness when he replied at last:

"My boy," he began quietly—"for you are still a boy when you stand beside my gray hairs—men may fight one another for a great principle without being personal enemies. We are men still, with common hopes, fears, ill-griefs and joys. When I was a soldier I fought the southern army, shot and shot to kill. I was fighting for a principle. When the firing ceased I helped the wounded men on the field as I came to them."

His voice quivered and broke for an instant.

"You have won. You can afford to be generous. That you can deny me in this the hour of my desolation is unthinkable. I'm not pleading for myself. I can live on a rat's allowance. I'm begging for my little girl. I need \$2,000 immediately to complete her musical studies. Deep down in your heart of hearts you know that the act would be one of justice between man and man."

"As a charity, Woodman, I might give you the paltry \$50,000 you ask."

"I'll take it as a charity," he cried eagerly, "take it with joy and gratitude and thank God for his salvation sent in the hour of my need."

"But in reality you demand justice of me? Come to the point, Woodman, what is in your mind when you say that I am your debtor?"

"Simply that I have always known that your formula for that drink was a prescription which I compounded

years ago and which you often filed for me when I was busy. As a physician I could not patent such a thing. You had as much right to patent it as any one else."

"In other words," Bivens interrupted coldly, "you inform me that you have always known that I stole from your prescription counter the formula which gave me my first fortune."

The financier began to speak with slow venomous energy:

"I've let you ramble on in your maudlin talk, Woodman, because it amused me. For years I've waited your coming. Your unexpected advent is the sweetest triumph of this festive night."

He paused, a sinister smile played about his mouth. "The last time I saw you I promised myself that I'd make you come to me the next time and when you did that you'd come on your hands and knees. And I swore that when you looked up into my face groveling and whining for mercy as you have tonight, I'd call my servants and order them to kick you down my doorstep."

He leaned across the massive flat top desk to touch an electric button.

The doctor's fist suddenly gripped the outstretched hand and his eyes glared into the face of the financier with the dangerous look of a madman.

"You had better not ring that bell, yet," he said, with forced quiet in his tones.

"Your tirade gives me an idea," said Bivens. "I want you to stay until the festivities end, and enjoy yourself. Take a look over my house. It cost two millions to build it, and requires half a million a year to keep it up. The butterflies those dancers are crushing beneath their feet in my ballroom I imported from Central America at a cost of \$5,000. The favors in jewelry I shall give to my rich guests who have no use for them will be worth \$25,000. Remember that I spent three hundred and fifty thousand on this banquet, which lasted eight hours and that I will see you and your daughter dead and in the bottomless pit before I will give you one penny. Enjoy yourself, it's a fine evening."

Before the doctor could answer, the financier laughed and left the room.

For a long time the dazed man stood motionless. He passed his big hand over his forehead in a vague instinctive physical effort to lift the fog of horror and despair that was slowly strangling him.

He felt that he was suffocating. He tore his collar apart to give himself room to breathe. He thrust his hand into the hip pocket of his dress suit where he usually carried a handkerchief and felt something hard and cold.

It was a revolver he had been accustomed to carry of late in his rounds through the dangerous quarters of the city. Without thinking when he dressed, he had transferred it to his evening suit. His hand closed over the ivory handle with a sudden fierce joy.

"Yes, I'll kill him in his magnificent ballroom, to the strains of his own music!" he said, half aloud. "I'll give a fit climax to his dance of death and the worm."

He quickly descended the stairs and saw Bivens talking with his wife. He didn't wish to kill him in her presence, and as he passed a look of hatred flashed from the little black eyes of the millionaire. He made up his mind to kill him at the moment the dance was at the highest pitch of gaiety.

The music began, and the dancers once more whirled into the center of the room and the crowd filled the space under the grand arch which led into the hall. Bivens was the center of an admiring group of sycophants and worshipful snobs. The doctor's heart gave a mad throb of joy. His hour had come.

With quick strides he covered the space which separated them and without a moment's hesitation thrust his hand into his breast for his revolver. Not a muscle or nerve quivered. His finger touched the trigger softly and he gave Bivens a look which he meant he should take with him into eternity, when just beyond him he saw Harriet. She stood motionless with a look of mute agony on her fair young face, watching Stuart talk to Bivens' wife.

His finger slipped from the trigger, and his hand loosed its deadly grip.

"Have I forgotten my baby?" he cried in sudden anguish. And then another vision flashed through his excited brain. A courtroom, a prisoner, his own bowed figure the center of a thousand eyes while the jury brought in their verdict.

His breath came in labored gasps as



His Finger Touched the Trigger Softly.

one mad thought succeeded another.

"No!" he said hoarsely. "I must save her. I must be cunning. I must succeed—not fail. I must get what I came here for. I must save my baby. My own fate is of no importance. She is everything."

Bivens had taken from him by fraud his formula, destroyed his business and robbed him of all he possessed. The law gave him power to hold it. He, too, would appeal to the same power and take what belonged to him. No matter how, he would take it, and he would take it tonight.

Bivens had boasted that his favors in jewelry would be worth \$25,000.

The doctor turned quickly and began to search the house until he found the half drunken servant arranging these packages under the direction of a secretary. These favors had been made for the occasion by a famous jeweler—a diamond pin of peculiar design, a gold death's head with diamond teeth and eyes surmounted by a butterfly and a caterpillar. The stones in each piece were worth \$100. They lay on a table in little open jewel boxes, fifty in a box, and each box contained \$5,000 worth of gold and precious stones.

The doctor inspected the boxes with exclamations of wonder and admiration. He bent low over the table for an instant, and when he left one of the jewel cases rested securely in his pocket.

He was amazed at his own skill and a thrill of fierce triumph filled his being as he realized that he had succeeded and that his little girl would go to Europe and complete her work. He spoke pleasantly to the secretary and congratulating him on his good fortune in securing such a master, turned and strolled leisurely back to the ballroom.

Not for a moment did he doubt the safety of his act. He was a chemist and knew the secret of the laboratory. He would melt the gold into a single bar and sell the diamonds as he needed them. His only regret was that he could not have taken the full amount he had demanded of the little scoundrel. He found Harriet and they started at once for home.

"Did you have a good time?"

"Yes, when I could forget the pain in my heart. You succeeded? It's all right? I'm going abroad at once to study?"

The doctor laughed aloud in a burst of fierce joy.

"Certainly, my dear."

The tears sprang into the gentle eyes as she answered gratefully.

"You can't know how happy you've made me."

Bivens, who had heard the doctor's laughter, passed and said with exaggerated courtesy:

"I trust you have enjoyed the evening, Woodman?"

The doctor laughed again in his face. "More than I can possibly tell you."

Bivens followed to the door and watched him slowly walk down the steps.

(To Be Continued.)

Attention, Farmers!

Clean up your yard now and see O. P. Monroe about buying all old scrap iron at the highest market price. 2-7-1mo-wkly

Better than Spanking!

Spanking will not cure children of wetting the bed, because it is not a habit but a dangerous disease. The C. H. Rowan Drug Co., Dept. B 1063, Chicago, Ill., have discovered a strictly harmless remedy for this distressing disease and to make known its merits they will send a 5c package securely wrapped and prepaid Absolutely Free to any ready of the Journal. This remedy also cures frequent desire to urinate and inability to control urine during the night or day in old or young. The C. H. Rowan Drug Co. is an Old Reliable House. Write to them today for the free medicine. Cure the afflicted members of your family, then tell your neighbors and friends about this remedy!

Our Store is Always Open!

We leave town for a few days to attend the Retail Hardware Convention, and on our return will be able to make manufacturers' prices on all Builders' Hardware.

All Mechanic's Tools I will give 10 per cent discount till March 15th
I will make a rate on Nails at \$2.60 per keg
Strap Hinges—4-inch 10c per pair; 6-inch 15c per pair; 8-inch 20c per pair—all with screws

And all other goods in proportion. Yours for a good, square deal

-G. P. EASTWOOD-

(Successor to John Bauer)

Local News

From Thursday's Daily

Mrs. H. E. Becker, from west of the city, is in town visiting at the home of her sister, Mrs. John Bauer, Sr.

Fred Rice returned this afternoon from Pilger, Neb., where he had been visiting the past few weeks with friends.

Tom Lee, who has been employed at the steel car department of the shops, departed this morning for Havelock, where he will be employed.

Louis Kroehler was a passenger on No. 15 this morning for Omaha to attend to business matters and attend the hardware men's convention.

Sandy Andrews and wife departed last evening on No. 2 for Gravit, Iowa, where they will visit with the parents of Mrs. Andrews for a short time.

Mrs. F. J. Hennings and daughter, Miss Helen, came in this morning from their home and were passengers for Omaha, where they visited for the day.

Mrs. A. R. Busay of Harford, Arizona, who has been here for some time visiting her daughter, Mrs. Robert Leland and family, departed this afternoon for her home.

Gus Roman and daughter, Mrs. Carl Holmberg, departed this morning for Sioux City, Iowa, where they will assist Mr. Roman's mother in celebrating her birthday anniversary.

Dr. R. N. Ransom and wife and baby of Cedar Rapids, Neb., who have been here visiting with the mother of Mrs. Ransome, Mrs. A. B. Swarthout, departed this morning for their home.

Enoch Moreland, living south of this city, was a passenger this afternoon for Omaha, where he goes to be present at the hospital when his brother, W. M. Moreland is operated on.

Charles Creamer drove up this morning from his home south of this city, and in company with his son, Joe, was a passenger for the metropolis to attend to business matters for a time.

Mr. and Mrs. C. B. Schlicher departed this afternoon for their home at Brady, Neb., after a short visit here with Charles Miller and family, south of this city. The many friends here were delighted to see them after their trip to the canal zone.

CHRIS STOCHR, A PIONEER CITIZEN, PASSES AWAY

From Friday's Daily.

Yesterday Chris Stoehr, one of the prominent and pioneer farmers of Eight Mile Grove precinct, passed away at the home of his daughter, Mrs. George Heil, near Cedar Creek. Mr. Stoehr had been operated on some time ago, and owing to his advanced age was unable to withstand the shock. He was 84 years of age and came to this country from his native land, Germany, many years ago, settling first in Illinois and later came to Nebraska, where he engaged in farming. His wife died several years ago and he leaves the following children to mourn his loss: Philip Stoehr, George, Conn and Adam Stoehr, Mrs. George Heil, Mrs. Adam Fornoff, Mrs. Katie Peterson and Mrs. Mary Metzger. The funeral will be held tomorrow, probably at the home of Mr. Heil.

DELIGHTFUL SURPRISE

TO MRS. RHODA COTNER AND DAUGHTER

From Thursday's Daily

Tuesday evening a large number of the friends and relatives of Mrs. Rhoda Cotner and her three little daughters, Mable, Hazel and Nellie, gathered at their home in the south part of the city and gave them a most delightful surprise party on the eve of their departure for Stella, Neb., where they will make their future home. There had been no intimation given of the party and the first Mrs. Cotner knew of the event was when the guests walked in unannounced, but soon recovering from the surprise, she made them feel at home and a most delightful evening was spent in games and social conversation, and at a late hour the hostess served some most delicious refreshments, to which the jolly company did most ample justice, and the party broke up with everyone vowing Mrs. Cotner a royal entertainer and wishing her and her daughters a prosperous and happy sojourn in their new home. The guests on this pleasant occasion were: John B. Cotner and wife, Walter Cotner and wife, Park Christner and wife, Lee Cotner and wife, Misses Agnes Lloyd, Gladys Cotner, Josie Rauhland, Emma Kaufmann, Zoah Walat, Anna Miller, Maude Ervin, Messrs. Arthur Cotner, Lester Christner, John Stewart, Ed Cotner, Clarence Cotner, Clyde Jones and Earnest Barger.

Death at Elmwood.

From Friday's Daily.

A special from Elmwood, under date of February 13, says: Isaac Mairs, aged 86 years, died at the home of his son, Silas Mairs, and was buried at the Elmwood cemetery today. Mr. Mairs was one of the pioneer settlers of Cass county.

Buys New Automobile.

From Friday's Daily.

A. L. Becker, the genial citizen of Liberty precinct, was in the city today looking after business matters and secured an automobile license for his new Ford car, which he recently purchased. Mr. Becker has secured the agency for this machine for his locality.

ROBERT WILKINSON
DUNBAR

L. J. HALL
UNION

Wilkinson & Hall -AUCTIONEERS-

The holding of successful sales is our line. Our interests are with the seller when it comes to getting every dollar your property is worth. For open dates address or call either of us at our expense by phone. Dates can be made at the Journal office.

-WILKINSON & HALL-

Real Estate

Bought and Sold

ON COMMISSION!

Insurance Placed in Best Companies!

Farm Loans and Rental Agency

- Virgil Mullis -



We are Ready!

with our 1913 Stock of New Wall Paper.

A bigger line than ever before.

A new plan too.

We will sell borders at the same price as the wall and ceiling.

Weyrich & Hadraba,
DRUGGISTS
and Kodak Dealers