

The THIRD DEGREE

A NARRATIVE OF METROPOLITAN LIFE

By CHARLES KLEIN AND ARTHUR HORNBLow

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CHAPTER XIV.

Outwardly, at least, Judge Brewster's office at 83 Broadway in no way differed from the offices of ten thousand other lawyers who strive to eke out a difficult living in the most overcrowded of all the professions. They consisted of a modest suite of rooms on the sixth floor. There was a small outer office with a railed-off inclosure, behind which sat a half dozen stenographers busy copying legal documents; as many men clerks were writing at desks, and the walls were fitted with shelves filled with ponderous law books. In one corner was a room with glass door marked "Mr. Brewster, Private."

Assuredly no casual visitor could guess from the appearance of the place that this was the headquarters of one of the most brilliant legal minds in the country, yet in this very office had been prepared some of the most sensational victories ever recorded in the law courts.

Visitors to Judge Brewster's office were not many. A man of such renown was naturally expensive. Few could afford to retain his services, and in fact he was seldom called upon except to act in the interest of wealthy corporations. In these cases, of course, his fees were enormous. He had very few private clients; in fact, he declined much private practice that was offered to him. He had been the legal adviser of Howard Jeffries, Sr., for many years. The two men had known each other in their younger days and practically had won success together—the one in the banking business, the other in the service of the law. An important trust company, of which Mr. Jeffries was president, was constantly involved in all kinds of litigation of



He Felt in Singularly Good Spirits.

which Judge Brewster had exclusive charge. As the lawyer found this highly remunerative, it was only natural that he had no desire to lose Mr. Jeffries as a client.

Secluded in his private office, the judge was busy at his desk, finishing a letter. He folded it up, addressed an envelope, then lit a cigar and looked at the time. It was three o'clock. The day's work was about over and he smiled with satisfaction as he thought of the automobile ride in the park he would enjoy before dressing and going to his club for dinner. He felt in singularly good spirits that afternoon. He had just won in the court a very complicated case which meant not only a handsome addition to his bank account, but a signal triumph over his legal opponents. Certainly, fortune smiled on him. He had no other immediate cases on hand to worry about. He could look forward to a few weeks of absolute rest. He struck a bell on his desk and a clerk entered. Handing him the note he had just written, he said:

"Have this sent at once by messenger."

"Very well, judge," answered the clerk.

"By the by," frowned the lawyer, "has that woman been in to-day?"

"Yes," she sat in the outer office all morning, trying to see you. We said you were out of town, but she did not believe it. She sat there till she got tired. She had no idea that you went out by another stairway."

"Humph," growled the lawyer, "a nice thing to be besieged in this manner. If she annoys me much longer, I shall send for the police."

At that moment another clerk entered the room.

"What is it, Mr. Jones?" demanded the lawyer.

"A lady to see you, judge," said the clerk, handing him a card.

The lawyer glanced at the bit of pasteboard, and said immediately:

"Oh, yes, show her in."

The two clerks left the room and Judge Brewster, after a glance in the mirror to re-adjust his cravat, turned to greet his visitor. The door opened and Alicia entered. She was faultlessly gowned, as usual, but her manner was hurried and agitated. Evidently something had happened to upset her, and she had come to make her husband's lawyer the confidant of her troubles. The judge advanced

gaily and pointed to a chair.

"Good morning, my dear Mrs. Jeffries; how do you do?"

"Is Mr. Jeffries here?" asked Alicia, hurriedly.

"Not yet," he replied, smiling. "This is an unexpected pleasure. I think it is the first time you have graced my office with your presence."

"How quiet it is here!" she exclaimed, looking around nervously. "It is hard to believe this is the very center of the city." Taking the seat offered to her, she went on:

"Oh, judge, we are dreadfully worried."

"You mean about the Underwood case?"

Alicia nodded.

"Yes, Mr. Jeffries is terribly upset. As if the coming trial and all the rest of the scandal were not enough. But now we have to face something even worse, something that affects me even more than my husband. Really, I'm frantic about it."

"What's happened now?" asked the lawyer, calmly.

"That woman is going on the stage, that's all!" she snapped.

"H'm," said the lawyer, calmly. "Just think!" she cried, "the name, Mrs. Howard Jeffries—my name—paraded before the public! At a time when everything should be done to keep it out of the papers this woman is going to flaunt herself on the stage!"

She fanned herself indignantly, while the lawyer rapped his desk absent-mindedly with a paper cutter. Alicia went on:

"You know I have never met the woman. What is she like? I understand she's been bothering you to take the case of that worthless husband of hers. Do you know she had the impudence to come to our house and ask Mr. Jeffries to help them? I asked my husband to describe her, but all I could get from him was that she was impertinent and impossible."

She hesitated a moment, then she added: "Is she as pretty as her pictures in the paper? You've seen her, of course?"

Judge Brewster frowned.

"Yes," he replied. "She comes here every day regularly. She literally compels me to see her and refuses to go till I've told her I haven't changed my decision about taking her case."

"What insolence!" exclaimed Alicia. "I should think that you would have her put out of the office."

The lawyer was silent and toyed somewhat nervously with the paper cutter, as if not quite decided as to what response to make. He coughed and fussed with the papers on the desk.

"Why don't you have her put out of the office?" she repeated.

The judge looked up. There was an expression in his face that might have been interpreted as one of annoyance, as if he rather resented this intrusion into his business affairs, but Mrs. Jeffries, Sr., was too important a client to quarrel with, so he merely said:

"Frankly, Mrs. Jeffries, if it were not for the fact that Mr. Jeffries has exacted from me a promise not to take up this case, I should be tempted to consider the matter. In the first place, you know I always liked Howard. I saw a good deal of him before your marriage to Mr. Jeffries. He was always a wild, unmanageable boy, weak in character, but he had many lovable traits. I am very sorry, indeed, to see him in such a terrible position. It was hard for me to realize it and I should never have believed him guilty had he not confessed to the crime."

"Yes," she assented. "It is an awful thing and a terrible blow to his father. Of course, he has had nothing to do with Howard for months. As you know, he turned him out of doors long ago, but the disgrace is none the less overwhelming."

The lawyer looked out of the window and drummed his fingers on the arm of his chair. Suddenly wheeling round, and facing his client, he said:

"You know this girl he married is no ordinary woman."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, sarcastically. "She has succeeded in arousing your sympathy."

The judge bowed coldly.

"No," he replied. "I would hardly say that. But she has aroused my curiosity. She is a very peculiar girl, evidently a creature of impulse and determination. I certainly feel sorry for her. Her position is a very painful one. She has been married only a few months, and now her husband has to face the most awful accusation that can be brought against a man. She is plucky in spite of it all, and is moving heaven and earth in Howard's defense. She believes herself to be in some measure responsible for his misfortune. Apart from that, the case interests me from a purely professional point of view. There are several strange features connected with the case. Sometimes, in spite of Howard's confession, I don't believe he committed that crime."

Alicia changed color and, shifting uneasily on her chair, scrutinized the lawyer's face. What was behind that calm, inscrutable mask? What theory had he formed? One newspaper had

suggested suicide. She might herself come forward and declare that Robert Underwood had threatened to take his own life, but how could she face the scandal which such a course would involve? She would have to admit visiting Underwood's rooms at midnight alone. That surely would ruin her in the eyes not only of her husband, but of the whole world. If this sacrifice of her good name were necessary to save an innocent man's life, perhaps she might summon up enough courage to make it. But, after all, she was by no means sure herself that Underwood had committed suicide. Howard had confessed, so why should she jeopardize her good name unnecessarily?

"No," repeated the judge, shaking his head, "there's something strange in the whole affair. I don't believe Howard had any hand in it."

"But he confessed!" exclaimed Alicia.

The judge shook his head.

"That's nothing," he said. "There have been many instances of untrue confessions. A famous affair of the kind was the Boon case in Vermont. Two brothers confessed having killed their brother-in-law and described how they destroyed the body, yet some time afterward the murdered man turned up alive and well. The object of the confession, of course, was to turn the verdict from murder to manslaughter, the circumstantial evidence against them having been so strong. In the days of witchcraft the unfortunate women accused of being witches were often urged by relatives to confess as being the only way of escape open to them. Ann Foster, at Salem, in 1692, confessed that she was a witch. She said the devil appeared to her in the shape of a bird, and that she attended a meeting of witches at Salem village. She was not insane, but the horror of the accusation brought against her had been too much for a weak mind. Howard's confession may possibly be due to some such influence."

"I hope for his poor father's sake," said Alicia, "that you may be right and that he may be proved innocent, but everything is overwhelmingly against him. I think you are the only one in New York to express such a doubt."

"Don't forget his wife," remarked the judge, dryly.

"No," she replied. "I really feel sorry for the girl myself. Will you give her some money if I—"

The lawyer shook his head.

"She won't take it. I tried it. She wants me to defend her husband—I tried to bribe her to go to some other lawyer, but it wouldn't work."

"Well, something ought to be done to stop her annoying us!" exclaimed Alicia, indignantly. "Mr. Jeffries suffers terribly. I can hear him pacing up and down the library till three or four in the morning. Poor man, he suffers so keenly and he won't let any one sympathize with him. He won't let me mention his son's name. I feel we ought to do something. Try and persuade him to let me see this girl—and you are his friend as well as his legal adviser."

Judge Brewster bowed.

"Your husband is a very old friend, Mrs. Jeffries. I can't disregard his wishes entirely."

There was a knock at the door of the private office.

"Come in," called the judge.

The door opened and the head clerk entered, ushering in Howard Jeffries, Sr. The banker, still aristocratic and dignified, but looking tired and careworn, advanced into the room and shook hands with the judge, who greeted him with a cordial smile.

There was no response on the banker's face. Querulously he demanded:

"Brewster, what's that woman doing out there again? It's not the first time I've met her in this office."

Alicia looked up eagerly. "Is she out there now?" she cried.

"What right has she to come here? What's her object?" went on the banker irritably.

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders.

"The same old thing," he replied. "She wants me to take her case."

The banker frowned.

"Didn't you tell her it was impossible?"

"That makes no difference," laughed the judge. "She comes just the same. I've sent her away a dozen times. What am I to do if she insists on coming? We can't have her arrested. She doesn't break the furniture or beat the office boy. She simply sits and waits."

"Have you told her that I object to her coming here?" demanded the banker, haughtily.

"I have," replied the judge, calmly, "but she has overruled your objection." With a covert smile he added, "You know we can't use force."

Mr. Jeffries shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"You can certainly use moral force," he said.

"What do you mean by moral force?" demanded the lawyer.

Mr. Jeffries threw up his hands as if utterly disgusted with the whole business. Almost angrily he answered:

"Moral force is moral force. I mean persuasion, of course. Good God, why can't people understand these things as I do?"

The judge said nothing, but turned to examine some papers on his desk. He hardly liked the inference that he could not see things as plainly as other people, but what was the use of getting irritated? He couldn't afford to quarrel with one of his best clients.

Alicia looked at her husband anxiously. Laying her hand on his arm, she said soothingly:

"Perhaps if I were to see her—"

Mr. Jeffries turned angrily.

"How can you think of such a thing? I can't permit my wife to

come in contact with a woman of that character."

Judge Brewster, who was listening in spite of the fact that he was seemingly engrossed in his papers, pursed his lips.

"Oh, come," he said with a forced laugh, "she's not as bad as all that!"

"I'm sure she isn't," said Alicia, emphatically. "She must be amenable to reason."

The banker's wife was not altogether bad. Excessive vanity and ambition had steeled her heart and stifled impulses that were naturally good, but otherwise she was not wholly devoid of feeling. She was really sorry for this poor little woman who was gnawing so bravely to save her husband. No doubt she had inveigled Howard into marrying her, but she—Alicia—had no right to sit in judgment on her for that. If the girl had been ambitious to marry above her, in what way was she more guilty than she herself had been in marrying a man she did not love, simply for his wealth and social position? Besides, Alicia was herself sorely troubled. Her conscience told her that a word from her might set the whole matter right. She might be able to prove that Underwood committed suicide. She knew she was a coward and worse than a coward because she dare not speak that word. The more she saw her husband's anger the less courage she had to do it. In any case, she argued to herself, Howard had confessed. If he shot Underwood there was no suicide, so why should she incriminate herself needlessly? But, there was no reason why she should not show some sympathy for the poor girl who, after all, was only doing what any good wife should do. Aloud she repeated:

"I'll see the girl and talk to her. She must listen to reason."

"Reason!" exploded the banker, angrily. "How can you expect reason from a woman who hounds us, dogs our footsteps, tries to compel us to—take her up?"

Judge Brewster, who had apparently paid no attention to the banker's

remarks, now turned around. Hesitatingly he said:

"I think you do her an injustice, Jeffries. She comes every day in the hope that your feelings toward your son have changed. She wishes to give color to the belief that his father's lawyers are championing his cause. She was honest enough to tell me so. You know her movements are closely watched by the newspapers and she takes good care to let the reporters think that she comes here to discuss with me the details of her husband's defense."

The banker shifted impatiently on his chair. Contemptuously he said:

"The newspapers which I read don't give her the slightest attention. If they did I should refuse to read them." With growing irritation he went on:

"It's no use talking about her any more. What are we going to do about this latest scandal? This woman is going on the stage to be exhibited all over the country and she proposes to use the family name."

"There is nothing to prevent her," said the lawyer, dryly.

The banker jumped to his feet and exclaimed angrily:

"There must be! Good God, Brewster, surely you can obtain an injunction restraining her from using the family name! You must do something. What do you advise?"

"I advise patience," replied the judge, calmly.

But Mr. Jeffries had no patience. He was a man who was not accustomed to have his wishes thwarted. He did not understand why there should be the slightest difficulty in carrying out his instructions.

"Any one can advise patience!" he exclaimed, hotly, "but that's not doing anything." Banging the desk angrily with his fist, he exclaimed: "I want something done!"

Judge Brewster looked up at his client with surprise. The judge never lost his temper. Even in the most acrimonious wrangles in the courtroom he was always the suave, polished gentleman. There was a shade of reproach in his tone as he replied:

"Come, come, don't lose your temper! I'll do what I can, but there is nothing to be done in the way you suggest. The most I can do is to remain loyal to you, although—to be quite candid—I confess it goes against the grain to keep my hands off this case. As I told your wife, there are certain features about it which interest me keenly. I feel that you are wrong to—"

"No, Brewster!" interrupted Mr. Jeffries, explosively. "I'm right! I'm right! You know it, but you won't admit it!"

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders and turned to his desk again. Laconically, he said:

"Well, I won't argue the matter with you. You refuse to be advised by me and—"

The banker looked up impatiently.

"What is your advice?"

The lawyer, without looking up from his papers, said quietly:

"You know what my feelings in the matter are."

"And you know what mine are!" exclaimed the banker, hotly. "I refuse to be engulfed in this wave of hysterical sympathy with criminals. I will not be stamped with the same hall mark as the man who takes the life of his fellow being—though the man be my own son. I will not set the seal of approval on crime by defending it."

The lawyer bowed and said calmly:

"Then, sir, you must expect exactly what is happening. This girl, whatever she may be, is devoted to your son. She is his wife. She'll go to any extreme to help him—even to selling her name for money to pay

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for his defense."

The banker threw up his hands with impatience.

"It's a matter of principle with me. Her devotion is not the question." With a mocking laugh he went on: "Sentimentality doesn't appeal to me."

The whole thing is distasteful and hideous to me. My instructions to you are to prevent her using the family name on the stage, to buy her off on her own terms, to get rid of her at any price."

"Except the price she asks," interposed the lawyer, dryly. Shaking his head, he went on:

"You'll find that a wife's devotion is a very strong motive power, Jeffries. It will move irresistibly forward in spite of all the barriers you and I can erect to stay its progress. That may sound like a platitude, but it's a fact nevertheless."

Alicia, who had been listening with varied emotions to the conversation, now interrupted timidly:

"Perhaps Judge Brewster is right, dear. After all, the girl is working to save your son. Public opinion may think it unnatural—"

(Continued Next Issue.)

THE STATE MEETING OF COMMERCIAL CLUBS

Representatives From the Platts-mouth Commercial Club Depart This Morning.

The State Federation of Commercial clubs holds a convention, lasting for two days, the meeting place being at Kearney. This is one of the most important conventions of the year and will exert an influence for good in the cities which are fortunate enough to possess a Commercial club live enough to get into the state federation. There will be a great banquet in Kearney tomorrow night for the delegates.

The delegates of the Platts-mouth club, departing for the convention this morning, were: President of the Platts-mouth President Bert Pollock, Secretary E. H. Wescott, and Directors George Falter and Rae Patterson.

Midnight in the Ozarks

and yet sleepless Hiram Scranton, of Clay City, Ill., coughed and coughed. He was in the mountains on the advice of five doctors, who said he had consumption, but found no help in the climate, and started home. Hearing of Dr. King's New Discovery, he began to use it. "I believe it saved my life," he writes, "for it made a new man of me, so that I can now do good work again." For all lung diseases, coughs, colds, la grippe, asthma, croup, whooping cough, hay fever, hemorrhages, hoarseness or quincy, it's the best known remedy. Price 50c and \$1.00. Trial bottle free. Guaranteed by Gering & Co.

Mr. William Heil of Eight Mile Grove was a business visitor in the county seat today.

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This Is the Case With Many Platts-mouth People.

Too many Platts-mouth citizens are handicapped with bad backs. The unceasing pain causes constant misery, making work a burden and stooping or lifting an impossibility. The back aches at night, preventing refreshing rest and in the morning is stiff and lame. Plasters and liniments may give relief, but cannot reach the cause. To eliminate the pains and aches you must cure the kidneys.

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Remember the name—Doan's and take no other.

Ball Game Saturday.

The Platts-mouth High School Athletic club will cross bats with the Glenwood High school ball team Saturday afternoon at the Chicago avenue ball park, the game to be called at 4 p. m. sharp. Friday the students will begin the sale of tickets, the admission being 25 cents. Don't miss the game. You will encourage the High school team by procuring seats early.

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