

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 III.

Mr. Bivens Calls.

STUART waked next morning with a sense of hopeless depression. What strange madness had come over the woman he loved? They had never discussed money before. Bivens was the only explanation.

A letter was on the hall rack which had been sent by a messenger. He broke the seal with nervous haste. It was from Bivens asking him to call his office telephone at 11 o'clock.

He tore the note into tiny pieces, stepped into the parlor and threw them into the grate. Some one was playing an old fashioned southern melody, and the tenderest voice accompanied the piano. He walked to the door of the music room.

It was Harriet Woodman. She looked up with a start.

"Oh, Jim, I didn't know you were there!"

"It was beautiful, little pal."

"Yes, I knew you'd like that piece. I heard you humming it one day. That's why I got it."

"What a sweet voice you have, child, so clear, so deep and rich and full of feeling. I didn't know you could sing."

"I didn't either until I tried."

"You must study music," he said, with enthusiasm.

The girl clasped her hands and leaped to her feet, exclaiming:

"Will you be proud of me, Jim, if I can sing?"

"Indeed I will," was the earnest answer.

The laughing eyes grew serious as she slowly said:

"Then I'll do my level best. I'm off, Goodbye."

On reaching his office on lower Broadway Stuart rang Bivens' telephone, and the president of the American Chemical company made an engagement to call at once.

Stuart was grateful for the timely call of a client who kept him in consultation for fifteen minutes while Bivens patiently waited his turn in the reception room.

The first view of Bivens was always unimpressive. He was short, thin and looked almost frail at first glance. A second look gave the impression of wily reserve force in his compact frame. His hair was jet black and thinning slightly on top, which gave him the appearance of much greater age than he could really claim. His thin features were regular, and his face was covered with a thick black beard which he kept trimmed to a keen point on the chin. His most striking features were a high massive forehead, abnormally long for the size of his body, and a pair of piercing, bead-like black eyes.

He rarely spoke except to a purpose, and his manners were quiet, almost furtive. He had thus early in his career gained a nickname that was peculiarly significant in Wall street. He was known as the Weasel.

His whole makeup, physical and mental, was curiously complex, a mixture of sobriety and greed, piety and cruelty, tenderness and indomitable will, simplicity of tastes with boundless ambition.

His friendship for Stuart and his deference to him personally and socially dated from their boyhood in North Carolina, and particularly from an incident which occurred in their college days. Bivens' father had been a notorious coward in the Confederate army and had at last deserted the service. On Bivens' arrival at college, a particularly green freshman, Stuart had discovered a group of his classmates hazing him. They had forced the coward's son to mount a box and repeat to the crowd the funny stories about the "valor" of his father. The boy, scared half out of his wits, stood stammer-

ing and perspiring and choking with shame as he tried to obey his tormentors.

Stuart protested vigorously, and a fight ensued in which he was compelled to thrash the ringleader and rescue the victim by force of arms. From that day Stuart was Bivens' beau ideal of a gentleman. He had tolerated rather than enjoyed this friendship.

Bivens shook hands quietly and took a seat beside Stuart's desk.

"Well?" said the lawyer at length.

"I've come to make you an important proposition, Jim. We need another attorney. The business of the company is increasing so rapidly our force can't handle it. I need a big man close to me. If you'll take the place I'll give you a salary that will ultimately be as big as the president gets in the White House. Twenty thousand to start with."

Stuart looked at his visitor curiously.

"Why do you want me, Cal? There are thousands of lawyers here who would jump at the chance. Many of them are better equipped than I."

"Because I know that you won't lie to me, you won't swindle or take advantage of me."

"Why not?" Stuart asked, with a smile.

"Because it's not in you."

"I see. You want to capitalize my character and use me to ambush the other fellow?"

"That's one way to look at it—yes."

"But that's not the real reason you come to me today with this proposition, is it?"

"Not the only one. You know my friendship for you is genuine. You know there's not a man in New York for whom I'd do as much as I will for you if you'll let me. Isn't that true?"

"I believe it—yes. And yet there must be another reason. You're not afraid of Woodman and wish to reach him through me?"

The ghost of a smile flitted around the shining little black eyes.

"Afraid?" he asked contemptuously.

"I'm not even interested in him. The old fossil's a joke. He thinks he can stop the progress of the world to attend a case of measles in Mott street."

Stuart was silent a moment, watching the dark masked face before him. At last he blurted out:

"Well, Cal, what's the real reason you make me this offer today?"

"You can keep a little secret?"

"You ought to know that before making me such an offer."

"Yes—yes, of course, I know you will." Bivens paused and resumed his cigar. "The fact is—Jim—I'm in love."

"But where do I come into this affair?"

"Simple enough. The Primroses—"

"Oh, it's Miss Primrose?"

"Yes—Miss Nan. You see, they think the world of you. She said you grew up together in the same town. I was telling her about my business. I must have been bragging about what we were going to do. I was crazy, just looking at her. Her beauty made me drunk. I told her we needed a new attorney. She said you were the man. I told her I'd offer you the place. She seemed pleased. Said she knew you would accept. You've got to accept, old man. I want to make her feel that her



"Think it over. I'll see you again!"

word is law with me. Tell me, do you think I've got a chance with a girl like that? You know I've never gone with girls much. I'm timid and awkward. I don't know what to do or what to say. But my money will help, won't it?"

"Money always helps in this town, Cal."

"And it means so much to a woman, too, don't it?"

"Yes. Have you said anything to Miss Nan yet?"

"Lord, no! Haven't dared. I'm kinder shying up to the old lady to get her on my side. She seems awfully friendly. I think she likes me. Don't you think it a good plan to cultivate her?"

"By all means," was the dry reply.

"Say, Jim, help me. Take this attorneyship. It will please her and I'll make you rich. Come in with me and you'll never regret it. I know my folks were not your social equals in the old days down south. But you know as well as I do that money talks here."

There was no mistaking the genuineness of Bivens' feelings. Stuart had but to accept the generous offer made

in good faith, and every cloud between him and Nan would vanish. They could be married at once and the future was secure. All he had to do was to keep silent for the moment as to his real relations to Nan and compromise his sense of honor by accepting the wages of a man whose principles he despised. His decision was made without a moment's hesitation.

"I refuse the offer, Cal," he said firmly.

Bivens rose quickly and placed his smooth hand on his friend's.

"I won't take that answer now. Think it over. I'll see you again."

He turned and left the room before Stuart could reply.

The lawyer drew a photograph from his desk and looked at it, smiling tenderly.

"I wonder, Nan! I wonder!"

The smile slowly faded, and a frown clouded his brow. The lines of his mouth suddenly tightened.

"I'll settle it today," he said with decision, as he rose, took his hat and left for Gramercy park.

It was noon when Stuart reached the Primrose house, and Nan was again out. He received the announcement from her mother with a feeling of rage he could ill conceal.

"Where is she? I seem never to be able to find her at home."

"Now, don't be absurd, Jim. You know she would have broken any engagement to see you had she known you were going to call today. I don't expect her home until 7."

"Of course, I understand, Mrs. Primrose," Stuart said with a light laugh. "I should have told her, but I didn't know until a few moments ago that I was coming."

"Nothing serious has happened, I hope?" she asked, with carefully modulated sympathy, which said plainly that she hoped for the worst.

"No. Just say that I'll call after dinner."

"All right, Jim, dear," the mother purred. "I'll see that she's here if I have to lock the door."

Stuart strolled out aimlessly and began to ramble without purpose. Some-how today everything on which his eye rested and every sound that struck his ear proclaimed the advent of the trust's new power of which Bivens was the symbol—Bivens with his delicate, careful little hand, his bulging forehead, his dark keen eyes. What chance had his old friend Woodman against such forces?

That Bivens should fall hopelessly and blindly in love with Nan at first sight was too stupefying to be grasped at once. She couldn't love such a man—and yet his millions and that slippery mother were a sinister combination.

By evening he had thrown off his depression and met Nan with something of his old gaiety, to which she responded with a touch of coquetry.

"Tell me, Jim," she began with a smile of mischief in her eyes, "why you called at the remarkable hour of 12 noon today? Am I becoming so resistless that work no longer has any charms? You must have something very important to say?"

"Yes, I have, Nan," he answered soberly, taking her hand. "I want a public announcement of our engagement in tomorrow morning's papers."

"But why? You know the one concession, the only one I have ever made to my mother's hostility to you, is that our engagement shall be kept secret until we are ready to marry. We must play fair."

"I will. We are ready now."

Nan's voice broke into a ripple of laughter.

"Oh, are we? I didn't know it."

"Yes, that's what I came to tell you," Stuart went on, catching her spirit of fun and pressing her hand. "I've arranged a little trip to the country tomorrow, and I'm going to convince you before we return. Make the announcement tonight, dear! On my honor I promise to convince you tomorrow that we are ready. I've an argument that never fails—an argument no woman can resist."

"Not tonight, Jim," was the laughing reply.

"Can't you trust me when I tell you that I've discovered something today that makes it necessary? I have seen Mr. Bivens."

Nan leaped to her feet, her face flushed, her voice ringing with triumph.

"And you did what I asked you. Oh, you're a darling! Why did you tease me so last night? You accepted his offer?"

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, dear, but I did not."

The girl dropped into her seat, with a sigh, while he went on:

"Bivens further confided in me the fact that he is hopelessly and desperately in love with you."

A flash of anger mantled Nan's cheeks.

"That will do, Jim," she said in quiet cold tones. "Your joke has gone far enough."

"Joke? Do you think I could joke on such a subject?"

A smile began to play about the corners of the full lips.

"I never dreamed he was so easy." Still smiling dreamily Nan crossed her hands over her knees and studied the pattern in the rug, ignoring the presence of her lover.

"Let's not joke, Nan. It's too serious."

"Serious? I fail to see it."

"Can't you see that we must at once announce our engagement?"

The girl's lips curled with the faintest suggestion of sarcasm.

"I don't see it at all. You may be a good lawyer, but I fail to follow your logic."

Stuart rose, with a gesture of anger.

"Come to the point, Nan. Let's not beat the devil around the stump any longer. You know as well as I do that you've been trying to flirt with this little insect. You know in your heart of hearts you despise Bivens."

"On the contrary, I vastly admire him. The man who can enter with his handicap this big, heartless city and successfully smash the giants who oppose him is not an insect. I'd rather call him a hero. All women admire success."

"It's disgusting!"

Nan fixed her dark eyes on Stuart.

"How dare you use such a word to me?"

"Because it's true, and you know it."

"True or false, you can't say it"—she rose deliberately—"you may go now."

"Forgive me, dear," Stuart stammered in a queer, muffled voice. "I didn't mean to hurt you. I was mad with jealousy."

"You may go," was the hard, even answer.

"I can't go like this, dearest," he pleaded. "You must forgive me—you must! Look at me!"

She turned slowly, stared him full in the face for a moment without the quiver of an eyelid, her fine figure tense, erect, cold, as she quietly said:

"You are trying me, Jim."

A blush of shame tinged his face as he tremblingly said:

"Please, dear, let's not part like this. I've suffered enough today. You're only teasing me. And I've acted like a fool. Say that you forgive me."

"Our engagement is at an end, Mr. Stuart," was the quiet answer.

"Nan!"

Before he could recover from the shock or utter a protest she opened the door and he had passed out into the night.

(To Be Continued.)

Mrs. Glen Rawls Improving.

The condition of Mrs. Glen Rawls, who is recovering from an operation for appendicitis at the Presbyterian hospital in Omaha, is reported this morning as being greatly improved and the prospects are very favorable for her speedy recovery, which will be very cheering to her many friends here.

Now Located in Chicago.

Eugene Tighe of Chicago arrived in this city on No. 24 today and will visit here for the day with relatives and old friends. Mr. Tighe is engaged in business in Chicago and took the opportunity to drop in and visit the old home town, and his host of friends here were delighted to meet him.

THE SECRET TERROR.

The haunting fear of sickness and helplessness is the secret terror of the working man. Health is his capital. Kidney diseases sap a man's strength and vitality. They lessen his earning capacity. Foley Kidney Pills bring back health and strength by healing the disease. They are the best medicine made for kidney and bladder troubles. The genuine are in the yellow package. Refuse any substitute. For sale by F. G. Fricke & Co.

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Those of our subscribers who desire to pay their subscriptions in wood are requested to bring it in before the roads get bad, as we desire to place it in the dry. Come in with it, boys, right away.

Don't use harsh physics. The reaction weakens the bowels, leads to chronic constipation. Get Doan's Regulets. They operate easily. 25c at all stores.



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OUR early Winter Clearance Sale of heavy suits and overcoats now when you have the three Winter months before you should arouse your buying spirit. Every suit and overcoat, including blue serges and fur overcoats are entered in this sale.

The following reductions from regular prices will be made—

All \$15.00 suits and overcoats	\$11.25
" 18.00 " " "	13.50
" 20.00 " " "	15.00
" 22.50 " " "	16.25
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Local News

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

Prof. Frank J. Kolbaba was a passenger this morning for Omaha, where he was called to look after his class in music in that city.

A. W. Atwood of Lorton, Neb., returned this morning from an extended trip through the east, and stopped off here for a short visit.

Mrs. D. B. Smith and daughter, Mrs. Robert Gibson, were passengers this morning for Omaha, where they attended to some business matters.

Sam Windham was a passenger this afternoon for Omaha, where he goes to practice with the basket ball team at the Y. M. C. A. building.

Mrs. Henry Tartsch returned to her home at Sioux City this afternoon, after a visit over Christmas with her parents, William Ballance and wife.

Thomas Roop of Lincoln, superintendent of motive power of the Burlington, was in the city today looking after business matters for the company.

J. L. Smith, from near Nehawka, motored to this city this morning with his brother, T. B. Smith, and attended to business matters for a few hours.

Major Creamer of Council Bluffs, supervising architect of government buildings, is in the city today looking after business matters at the postoffice building.

S. Hunt of Coleridge, Neb., who has been visiting here for a short time departed this morning for his home. Mrs. Ida Gilbert accompanied him and will visit there for a time.

Miss Josephine Delfs of Omaha, who has been staying at the home of Rev. J. H. Steger for a few days, returned to her home this morning on the early Burlington train.

Mrs. Pearl Forney of Beaver City, who has been here visiting her parents, R. Hearington and wife, and her sister, Mrs. F. M. Phebus and family, returned to her home this morning on No. 15.

The Journal for Calling Cards.



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