

THE ROOT OF EVIL

BY
THOMAS DIXON



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CHAPTER VII. An Old Perfume.

FOR nine years Stuart had refused to see or speak to Nan. He met Bivens as a matter of course, but always downtown during business hours or at one of his clubs. For the first year Nan had remained silent. And then she began to do a curious thing which had grown to be a part of his inmost life. For the past eight years she had written a brief daily diary recording her doings, thoughts and memories which she mailed to him every Sunday night. She asked no reply and he gave none. No names appeared in its story and no name was signed to the dainty sheets of paper which always bore the perfume of wild strawberries. But the man who read them in silence knew and understood.

The letter from her he held today was not an unsigned sheet of her diary. It was a direct, personal appeal, tender and beautiful in its sincerity. She begged him to forget the past because she needed his friendship and advice, and asked that he come to see her at once.

This letter was his first temptation to break the resolution by which he had lived for years.

He rose and paced the room with fury as he began to realize how desperate was his desire to go.

"Have I fought all these years for nothing?" he cried.

The thing that drew him with all but resistless power was the deeper meaning between the lines. He knew that each day the incompleteness of her life had been borne in upon her with crushing force. And yet he felt, by an instinct deeper than reason, that the day he returned from his exile and touched her hand would mark the beginning of a tragedy for both.

In the past nine years he had thrown his life away only to find it in greater power. The first year which he had given of unselfish devotion to the service of the people had been a failure, but at the end of four years he was nominated for district attorney and was swept into office by a large majority. The enforcement of justice ceased to be a joke and became a living faith.

His work had stirred the state to a nobler and cleaner civic life. During the past year he had become one of the foremost figures in American democracy—the best loved and the most hated and feared man in public life in New York. He asked no favors; he sought no preferment.

The work on which he had just entered was an investigation before an unusually intelligent grand jury of the criminal acts of a group of the most daring and powerful financiers of the world. When he realized the magnitude of the task he had undertaken he at once put his house in order for the supreme effort. It was necessary that he give up every outside interest that might distract his attention from the greater task.

The one matter of grave importance to which he was giving his time outside his office was his position as advisory counsel to Dr. Woodman in his suit for damages against the chemical trust, which had been dragging its course through the courts for years. To his amazement he had just received an offer from Bivens' attorneys to compromise this suit for \$100,000. He would of course advise the doctor to accept it immediately. He had never believed he could win a penny.

What could be Bivens' motive in making such an offer? It was impossible that the shrewd little president of the American Chemical Company had anything to fear personally from this attack. His fortune now could not be less than \$40,000,000, and the issue of such a suit as the one Woodman had brought and on which he had spent so much of his time and money was to Bivens a mere bagatelle.

It might be Nan—it must be! Her letter surely made the explanation reasonable. She knew this suit was an obstacle in the way of their meeting.

During the past winter she had become the sensation of the metropolis. Her wealth, her beauty, her palaces and her entertainments had made her the subject of endless comment. She had set a pace for extravagance which made the old leaders stand aghast. Her worldly wise mother had been dead for the past five years.

He was waiting the arrival of Woodman for a conference over Bivens' offer of compromise, and he dreaded the ordeal.

"I had hoped you were tired or ungiting a losing battle."

"I'll fight this battle to a finish and I'll win. If God lives I'll win—I'm so sure of it, my boy."

The doctor paused and his eyes flashed.

"I'm so sure of it that I'm not only going to refuse this bribe from Bivens, but my answer will be a harder blow. I'm going to begin another bigger and more important suit for the dissolution of the American chemical trust."

Stuart slipped his arm around the older man with a movement of instinctive tenderness.

"Look here, doctor, I've lived in your home for fourteen years and I've grown to love you as my own father. You must listen to me now. I can give no time to your suit. I am just entering on a great struggle for the people. Tremendous issues are at stake."

"You'll go down a wreck if you fall."

"Perhaps, but it's my duty."

"Good boy!" the older man cried, seizing Stuart's hand. "You can't fall. That's why I'm going to risk all in my fight."

"But the cases are not the same."

"No, I'm old and played out—my life's sands are nearly run, I haven't much to risk—but such as I have I offer it freely to God and my country. I envy you the opportunity to make a greater sacrifice—and you advise me to compromise for a paltry sum of money a righteous cause merely to save my own skin. I'm proud of you—proud that you live in my house, proud that I've known and loved you, and tried to teach you the joy and the foolishness of throwing your life away!"

With a wave of his hand the stalwart figure of the old man passed out and left him brooding in sorrowful silence.

He seized his pen at last, set his face like flint and resolutely wrote his answer:

Dear Nan—Your letter is very kind. I'll be honest and tell you that it has stirred memories I've tried to kill and can't hate to say so, but I must. Sincerely,
JIM

On the night following Stuart worked late in his office developing his great case. He was disappointed in the final showing of the evidence to be presented to the grand jury. His facts were not as strong as he expected to make them.

At 10 o'clock he quit work and hurried home to refresh his tired spirit with Harriet's music. As he hurried up the steps he nearly collided with a handsome young fellow just emerging from the door. He was dressed well, and he had evidently been calling on some one—perhaps on Harriet!

Stuart let himself in softly and started at the sight of Harriet's smiling face in the parlor doorway. His worst fears were confirmed. She was dressed in a delectable evening gown and had evidently enjoyed her visitor.

Stuart pretended not to notice the fact and asked her to play. As he sat dreaming and watching the rhythmic movement of her delicate hands he began to realize at last that his little pal still smelt red velvet and free-kick had silently and mysteriously grown into a charming woman. She was twenty-four now in the prime and glory of perfect young womanhood and yet she had no lovers. He wondered why. Her music, of course, it had been the one absorbing passion of life. And her eyes had always sparkled with deep joy at his slightest word of praise. For the first time it had occurred to him as an immediate possibility that she might marry and their lives drift apart.

A sweet comradeship had grown between them. He resented the idea of a break in their relations. Yet why should he? What rights had he over her life? Absolutely none, of course. Who was that fellow? Where had he met him before?

He rose with a sudden frown. Sure as fate—the very boy—the tall, dreamy-looking youngster who danced with her so many times that night ten years ago at her birthday party! She said he was too frail—that her prince must be strong. Well, confound him, he had got strong.

Stuart said, with a studied indifference:

"Tell me, little pal, who was that tall young fellow I ran into on the steps?"

"Why, don't you remember my frail young admirer of long ago?"

"Do you love him, girlie?"

"When I was very, very young, I thought I did. It makes me laugh now. It's wonderful how much we can outgrow—isn't it?"

"I just don't like him, and I don't want you to like him. You see, little pal, I'm your guardian."

"Are you?"

"Yes. And I'm giving you due legal notice that you have no right to marry without my consent—you promise to make me your confidant?"

A soft laugh, full of tenderness and joy, came from the girl as she turned her eyes upward for the first time:

"All right, guardie, I'll confer with you on that occasion."

(To Be Continued.)

The Modern Woodmen of America will give their first annual mask ball on the evening of January 25, 1913. Good prizes will be given and a royal good time is assured to all. Music by the M. W. A. orchestra.

Thomsen, Dentist, Wescott Bldg.

"THE BACHELOR'S HONEY-MOON" WELL ATTENDED

From Wednesday's Daily. "The Bachelor's Honeymoon" appeared at the Parmele theater last evening before a very fair audience, which was greatly pleased with the play as presented by the company. The fact that a former Plattsmouth young man, V. O. Rankin, appeared in the company, drew a large crowd of his former friends to the theater and he received quite an ovation when he appeared on the stage. He was very clever in his role and his acting greatly pleased the audience. The play was of the farce comedy order and designed for laughing purposes only, and it certainly served its purpose, as the audience was kept in a continuous roar of laughter by the comical situations in the play. As a whole the play was a very fair one and presented in a very capable manner.

OFFICERS ELECTED FOR THE BANK OF UNION

From Wednesday's Daily. The stockholders of the Bank of Union held their annual meeting on Monday, and all the officers re-elected with the exception of president, M. H. Shoemaker declining another year's service, and William Ost was elected to that position. The only other change made was the addition of the names of W. B. Banning and W. G. James to the directorate. The bank's officers for the ensuing year are as follows: President, William Ost; vice president, L. G. Todd; cashier, J. M. Peterson; assistant cashier, Miss Iva Mongey; directors, J. M. Patterson, M. H. Shoemaker, William Ost, L. G. Todd, August F. Ost, W. B. Banning and W. G. James.—Union Ledger.

FILES COMPLAINT IN COUNTY COURT FOR ASSAULT

County Attorney C. H. Taylor today filed in the county court a complaint against Charles Chester and Carl Olson, who are employed in the quarries at Cedar Creek, charging them with assaulting Martin Miller of that village. The assault occurred last evening at Cedar Creek, when the men became involved in an altercation and the complaining witness alleges the defendants knocked him down and proceeded to kick him several times and otherwise attempted to mar the beauty and symmetry of his face and form by beating him, and he came to this city this morning and lodged his complaint with the county attorney. Deputy Sheriff Manspeaker will go out to Cedar Creek this afternoon to serve the warrants and bring the prisoners in for arraignment.

Local News

Paul Stadelman takes subscriptions for any magazine or club of magazines at special rates.

L. C. W. Murray was in the city yesterday for a few hours looking after some trading with the merchants.

Henry Thierolf of Cedar Creek was in the city today calling on his doctor to have his foot dressed.

William Puls of Murray was in the city today looking after some trading with the merchants for a few hours.

D. A. Young, from south of this city, was in town this afternoon attending to business matters for a few hours.

Forest Rose Flour guaranteed to be as good as any flour on the market. Sold by all leading dealers. Try it.

Miss Esther Olson came over this morning from Pacific Junction to look after some business matters for a few hours.

George Bruchocher departed this morning for his home at Ashland, after a short visit here with friends and relatives.

Frank Ashenbrenner departed this afternoon for the metropolis, where he was called to look after some important business matters.

21st ANNUAL MASK BALL

GIVEN BY
T. J. SOKOL
Saturday Night, Jan. 18

AT THEIR HALL, CORNER 14th and Pearl Streets.

FIVE BIG PRIZES.

ADMISSION:
Gents 50 Cents Ladies 25 Cents
Spectators 25 Cents

Miss Bertha Seiver of Marquette, Neb., arrived this morning to visit for a time with her sister, Mrs. J. L. Thompson and family in this city.

J. B. Tipton, the Pollock-Duff bridge tender, came down from his home this afternoon to look after some trading with the merchants for a few hours.

Will Kehne, Clarence Meisinger and Fred Kaffenberger were passengers this morning for Omaha, where they will spend the day with August Kehne at the hospital. August is getting along nicely and expects to be able to return home the last of the week.

L. F. Langhorst and W. C. Bartlett of Elmwood were in the city last evening visiting with their friends. Mr. Langhorst has just recently recovered from a severe illness, but is feeling much improved in health, which will be pleasing news to his many friends here.

PANIC FROM JEWS' EXPULSION

Commercial Trouble Occurs in Kiev, Moscow and Lodz.

A commercial panic, with many failures, has been precipitated by the ukase expelling the remaining Jews from the city of Kiev by the end of the Russian year. Among those expelled are 164 merchants of the first guild, with their families. Their status means that they are traders in a large way of business, and the Moscow Produce Exchange, in order to protect the entire home market, has had to petition the minister of finance to modify or delay the expulsion.

The petition sets forth that the 164 Jewish merchants do an extensive business in Russia, with an turnover in the past year of over \$25,000,000. They have current liabilities of half that sum in bills of exchange, of which three-quarters are owing in Moscow and the other quarter in Lodz.

The Jews of Kiev have transferred most of their cash balances to Roumanian and Austrian banks, so that an immediate effect of their expulsion would be to flood Moscow and Lodz manufacturers with bad debts and involve thousands of smaller firms in the retail trade.

KAISERIN BARS AIR CRAFT.

German Empress Forbids Aviators From Flying Near Palace.

The German empress has made a formal request that aeroplanes and Zeppelin dirigibles be forbidden to pass over the royal palace.

She said she had been made very nervous by the constant Gatling gun-like explosions of the engines and feared also that some of the air craft might fall on the palace.

Significant.

"Albert, what did your sister say when you told her I was in the parlor waiting?" inquired the hopeful young man.

"Nothing." But she took a ring off one finger and put it on another.—Lipincott's.

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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 -