

THE ROOT OF EVIL

BY THOMAS DIXON



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CHAPTER VIII. A Straight Tip.

NAN received the announcement of Bivens' failure to settle Woodman's suit with a grim resolution to win now, at all hazards. The sensational reports of Stuart's action against the big financiers had given her quick mind the cue to a new line of stratagem. She began cautiously.

"You are not going to give up a thing I've set my heart on merely because old Woodman's a fool, are you?" she asked her husband, with a touch of scorn. "Jim Stuart is the best friend you ever had. He has become one of the most famous men in America. I want him at our next entertainment."

"The thing that puzzles me," Bivens broke in, "is why he will not come to the house. When I meet him down town he's always friendly."

Nan's lips quivered with a queer little smile.

"Will he succeed in this action against these men?"

"No, he can't get the facts. If he could he'd shake the foundations of the financial world."

"Why not give the facts to him?"

"I had thought of that, but it might bring on a panic."

"What have you to lose by it?"

"Nothing, but a panic's a dangerous thing to monkey with."

"It couldn't injure Stuart?" his wife asked cautiously.

"No. It couldn't hurt him. On the other hand, I might make him the unconscious instrument of a great personal vengeance, double my fortune and possibly land Jim in the White House."

"You must do it, dear!" his wife cried, trembling with suppressed excitement.

"It's playing with dynamite."

"It's worth the risk to double your fortune. Do it for my sake!"

Nan leaned close and pressed her husband's hand while her dark eyes found their way into his heart.

"I'll do it," he said with firm accent. "I'll phone him at once."

When Stuart sat down with Bivens in one of the magnificent private dining rooms of his millionaire club two days later he was struck with the perfection of the financier's dress and the easy elegance of his manners.

"Nan has surely done wonders with some pretty crude material!" he mused. He recalled Nan's diary with grim amusement.

It took two years to thoroughly break him so that she could always be sure that his nails were trimmed and his clothes in perfect style. He had long since ceased to struggle and had found much happiness of late years in vying with her in the perfection of his personal appearance.

When the dinner was finished Bivens dismissed the waiter, lighted one of his huge cigars and drew from a morocco case which he had placed beside his chair a typewritten manuscript. He turned its leaves thoughtfully a moment and handed them to Stuart.

"There's a document, Jim, that cost me \$10,000 to prepare; for whose suppression \$1,000,000 would be paid and no questions asked."

"But why this generosity on your part, Cal?"

"I have anticipated that question. I answer it fully and frankly. There is enough dynamite in that document to blow up half of Wall Street and land somebody in the White House."

"And many in the morgue?"

"And some in the penitentiary. I've watched your work the past nine years with genuine pride, Jim. You've said a lot of hard things about rich malefactors, but you've never touched me."

"No, I think you're too shrewd to be caught in that class, Cal."

"I pride myself that I am. It's only the clumsy fool who gets tangled in the criminal law. But a lot of them have done it—big fellows whose names fill the world with noise. I've taken the pains to put into that typewritten document the names, the dates, the places, the deeds, the names of the witnesses and all the essential facts. Do what you please with it. If you do what I think you will, some men who are wearing purple and fine linen will be wearing stripes before another year and you will be the biggest man in New York."

"And your motive?"

"Perhaps I wish to get even with some men who have done me a dirty trick or two, and perhaps incidentally in the excitement which will follow this exposure of fraud and crime I

may make an honest penny. Is that enough?"

"Quite."

"And you'll make the attack at once?"

Stuart glanced rapidly through the first page of the document, and his eyes began to dance with excitement.

"The only favor I ask," Bivens added, "is twenty-four hours' notice before you act."

"I'll let you know."

Stuart rose quickly, placed the document in his inside pocket and hurried home.

The deeper the young lawyer probed into the mass of corruption Bivens had placed in his hands the more profound became his surprise. That men whose names were the synonyms of honesty and fair dealing, men intrusted with the management of companies whose assets represented the savings of millions of poor men, the sole defense of millions of helpless women and children—that these trusted leaders of the world were habitually prostituting their trusts for personal gain, staggered belief.

He delayed action and began a careful, patient, thorough investigation. As it proceeded his amazement increased. He found that Bivens had only scratched the surface of the truth.

New York, the financial center of the nation, had gone mad with the insane passion for money at all hazards—by all means, fair or foul. The nation was on the tidal wave of its most wonderful industrial boom in its history. The price of stocks had reached fabulous figures and still soared to greater heights. Millionaires were springing up like mushrooms, in a night.

Two months had passed since Bivens placed in the district attorney's hands the document which was destined to make sad history in the annals of the metropolis. Stuart felt that the time had come to act. It was his solemn duty to the people.

He sat in his private office in one of the great skyscrapers downtown, holding in his hand a list of the men he was about to ask the grand jury to indict for crimes which would send them to prison, exile and dishonored death.

"I've got to do it—that's all. But before I do, I'm going to know one or two things beyond the shadow of a doubt."

He seized his telephone and made an appointment to call at once on Bivens.

The financier extended his delicate hand and with a cordial smile led Stuart to a seat beside his desk. The only sign he betrayed of deep emotion was the ice like coldness of his slender fingers.

"Well, Jim, you've completed your very thorough investigation?"

"How did you know I was making a thorough investigation?"

"I make it my business to know things which vitally interest me. You found my facts accurate, and you are ready to strike?"

"When I have confirmed some statements you have made in your story

concerning the private life of these men. How do you know the accuracy of the facts you state in a single line, for instance, about the private life and habits of the president of a certain

trust company?"

"You don't suppose I would make a statement like that unless I know it to be true?"

"How did you discover it?"

"Very simply."

Bivens stepped to one of the great steel safes and drew out a manuscript notebook of some 300 pages of typewritten matter. On the back of the morocco cover was printed in plain gold lettering: "The Private Life of No. 560."

He handed the volume to Stuart, closed the safe and resumed his seat.

"You may take that book with you, Jim," he said quietly. "I trust to your honor not to reveal its contents except in the discharge of your sworn duty as an officer of the law. You will find in it the record of the distinguished president's private life for the past ten years without the omission of a single event of any importance."

Stuart glanced through the book with amazement.

"How did you come into possession of such facts?"

"No trouble at all," was the easy answer. "It only requires a little money and a little patience and a little care in selecting the right men for the right job. Any man in the business world who thinks he can do as he pleases in this town will wake some morning with a decided jolt. The war for financial supremacy has developed a secret service which approaches perfection. Not only do I systematically watch my employees until I know every crook and turn of their lives, but I watch with even greater care the heads of every rival firm in every department of the industrial world where my interests touch theirs."

"I not only watch the heads of firms, I watch their trusted assistants and confidential men. In that big safe a thousand secrets lie locked whose revelation would furnish matter enough to run the yellow journals for the next five years. Modern business is war, the fiercest and most cruel the world has ever known. It is of greater importance to a modern captain of industry to know the plans of his enemy than it ever was to the commanding general of an opposing army."

"I see," Stuart responded thoughtfully.

"There are men down there in the street now," Bivens went on dreamily, "who are wearing silk hats today for whom the prison tailor is cutting a suit. I have their records in that silent steel clad room. It's a pitiful thing, but it's life."

"The saddest thing in New York today, Jim, is the man who can't be bought and sold. The thing that's beyond price in the business world is character—combined with brains. That's why I made you the offer I did once upon a time to come in with me. There are positions today in New York with a salary of half a million a year waiting for men who can fill them. If I could find one man of the highest order of creative and executive ability who would stand by me in my enterprises I could be the richest man in the world in ten years."

Stuart lifted his eyes from the record he was casually scanning and smiled into Bivens' dark, serious face.

The man silenced the speaker. "The little man knew instinctively that Stuart was at that moment weighing his own life and character by the needless standard he had set up for others. Judged by conventional laws, he had nothing to fear. He was a faithful member of his church. He gave liberally to its work and gave generously to a hundred worthy charities. He loved his wife with old-fashioned loyalty and tenderness and grieved that she was childless. He stood by his friends and fought his enemies, asking no quarter and giving none."

Yet in his heart of hearts he knew that, however loftily he might discourse at present about "character," "honor," "integrity" and "fair dealing," he had stolen the formula from his big hearted employer, Woodman, with which he had laid the foundation of his fortune. It was the first half million that came hard. It was this first half million that bore the stain of shame."

His other questionable acts on which the fate of millions had often hung he had no difficulty in justifying. Business was war.

Bivens waited for Stuart to speak. The moment was one big with fate. Stuart was about to reach a decision that would make history. No one knew so well its importance as the keen intellect that gleamed behind the little black eyes watching with tireless patience. Below he could hear the roar of the city's life. Men bought and sold with no fear of tomorrow. Yet a single word from the lips of the tall, clean shaven young officer of the law and a storm would break which might tear from the foundations institutions on whose solidity modern civilization seemed to rest.

"Well, Jim," Bivens said at length, "you are going to act?"

Stuart rose abruptly, his reply sharp and clear.

"Yes, I'm going to act."

"At once?"

"It's my duty."

Bivens grasped his hand.

"I congratulate you, Jim. You are going to do a big thing, one of the biggest things in our history. You are going to teach the mighty that the law is mightier. It ought to land you at the very top in politics or any other old place you'd like to climb."

"That's something which doesn't interest me yet, Cal. The thing that stings me is that I've got to do so painful a thing. But my business is the enforcement of justice. There's one thing I still can't understand—why you of all men on earth should have put this information in my hands. The honor of the achievement, if good shall

come to the country, is really yours, not mine."

"And you can't conceive of my acting for the country's good?"

Bivens' black eyes twinkled.

"Not by the wildest leap of my imagination."

The twinkle broadened into a smile as the lawyer continued:

"Your code is simple, Cal. There's no provision in it for disinterested effort for others. This time you've got me up a tree. You have rendered the people a great service. You have placed me under personal obligations. But how you are going to get anything out of it is beyond me."

"Oh, I'll have my reward, my boy," Bivens answered jovially, as his dainty fingers again stroked his beard, pressing his mustache back from the thin lips, "and I assure you it will not be purely spiritual."

The door had scarcely closed on Stuart when Bivens pressed the button which called his confidential secretary.

In a moment the man stood at his elbow with the tense erect bearing of an orderly on the field of battle. The quick nervous touch of the master's hand on that button had told to his sensitive ears the story of a coming life and death struggle. His words came with sharp, nervous energy:

"Yes, sir?"

"A meeting of the Allied Bankers here in thirty minutes. No telephone messages. A personal summons to each. They enter one at a time that no one on the outside sees them come."

(To Be Continued.)

ST. MARY'S GUILD MEET

AT THE DONNELLY HOME

From Friday's Daily.

The St. Mary's Guild of St. Luke's parish held a most delightful kensington and program at the pleasant home of Mrs. James H. Donnelly yesterday afternoon. This most enjoyable occasion was very largely attended and proved a splendid afternoon's entertainment. Most of the ladies brought their kensington bag and whiled away some very pleasant moments plying the busy needles on dainty fancy work. A feature of the afternoon's entertainment was an excellent program, who was fortunate enough to be pres- greatly enjoyed. This program consisted of vocal selections by Mrs. H. S. Austin, Miss Edith Doxy, Miss Barbara Clement; piano solos were furnished by Mrs. George Falter and Miss Emma Cummins, while these vocal and instrumental numbers were interspersed by readings by Miss Marie Douglass. Mrs. Donnelly was unable to sing. The numbers on this program were given in a very charming manner and greatly assisted in making this kensington so pleasing. After the program excellent refreshments were served, and at about 5 o'clock the large company dispersed, vowing the occasion a success in a financial way and Mrs. Donnelly a splendid and very hospitable entertainer.

A Girl's Wild Midnight Ride.

To warn people of a fearful forest fire in the Catskills a young girl rode horseback at midnight and saved many lives. Her deed was glorious, but lives are often saved by Dr. King's New Discovery in curing lung trouble, coughs and colds, which might have ended in consumption or pneumonia.

"It cured me of a dreadful cough and lung disease," writes W. R. Patterson, Wellington, Tex., "after four in our family had died with consumption, and I gained 87 pounds." Nothing so sure and safe for all throat and lung troubles. Price 50c and \$1.00. Trial bottle free. Guaranteed by F. G. Fricke & Co.

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DELIGHTFUL TIME AT THE HOME OF GEORGE STANDER

From Friday's Daily.

Last evening the young people of the Christian church enjoyed a most delightful social time at the George Stander home, west of this city, when Messrs. John, Hugh and Russell Stander, members of the Loyal Sons class of the church, acted as hosts for the throng of happy young people. The Messrs. Stander drove in early in the evening and brought the jolly crowd out in hay-racks, and the fun of the trip was greatly enjoyed by the young people and everyone was in the best of humor for the entertainment that was provided for them at the Stander home, and there was not a dull moment during the whole evening. Games and music were indulged in until the crowning feature of the evening's pleasure came in the shape of the most delicious refreshments, to which everyone certainly did ample justice, and when the home-going hour came everyone voted the Stander boys most royal entertainers and hoped to be their guests again.

JULIAN CARLSON ENTERS

PLEA OF GUILTY TO ASSAULT

From Friday's Daily.

The sheriff yesterday afternoon brought Julian Carlson in from Cedar Creek to answer to the charge of assault on the person of Martin Miller, and he entered a plea of guilty and was fined \$20 and costs, which he paid. The other defendant in this case, Charles Chester, made his escape and could not be found, so he will have to remain a fugitive from justice. Martin Miller, the man who was assaulted, was also fined \$10 and costs on complaint of being drunk on the occasion when the assault took place. The parties are from near Cedar Creek, where they are employed in the quar-

ries and it would be well for them in the future to use better judgment when they feel in a warlike mood.

C. B. SCHLEICHER AND WIFE DEPART FOR PANAMA

From Friday's Daily.

Word has been received by Charley Miller and wife, who reside south of this city, from their son-in-law, C. B. Schleicher and wife, informing them that they were all ready to sail for Panama, and by this time they are well on their way to the canal zone and enjoying the balmy breezes of the gulf. While at Tampa, Florida, Mr. Schleicher had the pleasure of meeting a sister whom he had not seen for years, and it was by accident that he discovered her address, as he was conversing with a gentleman there and mentioned the name of his brother-in-law, when the man informed him he was well acquainted with them and gave Mr. Schleicher their address, and the result was a most joyful reunion between the brother and sister, so long separated. Mr. Schleicher and wife are enjoying fine health and having the time of their lives on their excursion.

A Hero in a Lighthouse.

For years J. S. Donahue, So. Haven, Mich., a civil war captain, as a light house keeper, averted awful wrecks, but a queer fact is, he might have been a wreck, himself, if Electric Bitters had not prevented. "They cured me of kidney trouble and chills," he writes, "after I had taken other so-called cures for years, without benefit, and they also improved my sight. Now, at seventy, I am feeling fine." For dyspepsia, indigestion, all stomach, liver and kidney troubles, they're without equal. Try them. Only 50 cents at F. G. Fricke & Co.

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"The Private Life of No. 560."

concerning the private life of these men. How do you know the accuracy of the facts you state in a single line, for instance, about the private life and habits of the president of a certain

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