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AGAINST THE TIDE.

In Three Parts. Part III.

[Summary Parts I and II. "Dick," an affectionate but peculiar child, on reaching young manhood gives himself over to the fanatical following of sociological theories concerning crime. Under the influence of his declaration that depraved children have no right to life, a young mother of the slums murders her child, and is committed to prison for the deed.]

Richard did not come home until late that night, one of those late spring blizzards had come up and I was frightened to have him out so late. When finally he came in at eleven, he looked down thoughtfully into the fire while he told me that he had not spoken at the meeting, and I knew from the mud on his shoes that he had been walking.

Next morning I read in the paper that the working men had refused to listen to him. When the cabman learned whom he had driven out he declined to bring him back. The next day he had a cold and a fever. He refused to take any of my remedies, since to take medicine was to own himself an invalid. I sent a telegram to John.

Every morning Richard went down into the city with his head high in the air, and I should have liked to see any one ever strike one of us as long as he held up his head and approved of himself. He would go down into the busiest streets of the city and buy the paper of his old friend, the oil-king, and read the news smilingly as he sat before the fire in the little sitting-room, and brilliant grew the oil-king, he made a better newspaper man than you might have supposed. Vim and Venom go a long ways toward making brilliancy. Truly the boy must have worn a crown of thorns those days. But he never complained. He tried to fill an evening engagement before a gathering of economists one evening, but was driven back by the gathering mob. When he saw the paper the next morning, he understood the new hostility of the people.

The girl had killed herself. Not in a nice, calm, lady-like way, she had little choice of means there in the cell, but in a frightful manner. She had been dismayed to find that she had added a criminal to the world, not taken one way.

After that Richard did not try to keep up. I was glad when John came. He went at once to Richard's bedside and the boy told him all about it.

The old lady who owned the house had always been proud of "her boy" as she called him, and talked with tears in her eyes of his genius, but she came to me that morning with stern, white lips and told me that Richard would have to find another room as soon as he was better.

"Very well," I said, "we'll take him away then, but he won't need another room." And John, who came in just then thought I meant we'd take him home with us.

We could hardly get a physician, they were all suddenly "very busy." Who ever before saw a city without a dozen loafing physicians? Finally we sent for the city doctor. He could not refuse to come; he even attended sick criminals at the penitentiary. All the time that man was by the boy's bedside he never looked up, his eyes rolled around furtively as a rat's in a hole looking for escape. He wrote out a hasty prescription and was about to take his leave when John seized him by the shoulder.

John isn't a swearing man, but I have never been sorry for what he said to that doctor. He sank back

frightened and prepared some medicine at once with trembling hands. John raised the boy's head and I forced the medicine by spoonfuls between his set teeth.

For a few days his fever ran high and then he grew calmer. But he didn't try to arise. John thought he was ill yet and wanted to send for the doctor. But I knew his heart was breaking. A man cannot live when his ambition has been killed. He had laid his offering at the altar and it had been refused. He had struggled against the will of society and failed. He had tried to beat his way against the tide and been overwhelmed by the strong, steady waves closing over his head. What mattered one life more or less? He may have been the forerunner of progress, but he was not strong enough to bring about the advancement itself.

At last one night he rested quietly, peacefully as a man whose day's work is done whether for good or evil, and the nurse watched him while he slept. John and I sat and talked in the little sitting-room, so that he might sleep undisturbed. When his father was near he tried to tell him over and over about the mistake,—how the girl shouldn't have died, she was innocent, but the baby was better off.

John talked hopefully to me that night of what he and Richard would do when the boy was well again. He confided to me that he had had wild hopes and ambitions himself once, but he had always kept them under.

"The individual must keep himself under," he said, "if he isn't one of the crowd he must pretend to be. It's like a flock of sheep where there are too many leaders, the flock gets spread out too much. I'd like to have seen Richard a leader first rate if he'd have liked to be one."

"Do you know, Marian," he said again, "that if Richard had died, I couldn't have stood it?"

"Oh, yes, you could," I answered, "there are worse things than death."

"If Richard were dead," said John, "I don't know what I'd live for any more. You don't know how it is when he's away. There's the rocking-horse he used to have when he was a baby; I've never let them take it out of the old parlor. We never had the new house built because his schooling cost a good deal, but I didn't tell him. You must never tell him, Marian."

"No, I won't," I said, quietly.

"You don't think he will die, do you, Marian? I can't stand to have him die!"

"Do you remember," I asked, "at the funeral of Elmer's babies you held your own child safely in your arms with never a tear?"

"It was because I knew I shouldn't lose him. I have ridden over those plains on the wildest horses with Dick beside me on whatever horse he fancied and I was never afraid. I knew that he was mine. I loved every breath of the prairie air and I worshipped God in my heart, but I knew

and God knew that I should hate him and his creatures through all the worlds to come if I should lose baby Dick. Elmer gave up his children too easily."

"That time, do you remember, Marian, when Elmer's little boy was buried, how little Dick stood at the edge of the grave and cried out that they were covering up the pretty posies? He loved pretty things, bless his heart! He couldn't bear to see the flowers covered up."

And so we talked through all the long evening and I listened every minute for a word from the nurse. Whenever she moved, my heart stopped beating with the fear that she was coming to call us. How could I bear it? How could John live through it?

About midnight she came for us. Richard was sitting up in bed with eyes staring frightfully ahead at something we could not see. His hands were stretched out imploringly, and his pallid face covered over with great drops of sweat. So he who had never been afraid of anything in all his life was afraid at last to die.

John spoke to him reassuringly. The boy turned his vacant eyes toward the voice. "I can't see you, papa," he whispered, hoarsely. "Don't let me die. It's baby Dick, don't let him die!"

Oh, baby Dick, never before had that power failed and sorry enough it is to fall you now. But there are stronger powers on earth than a father's protecting love or the tears of a helpless old auntie who can only wring her hands and let her darling sink back on his pillow with great staring eyes and clenched fists, breathing no longer.

John gave one great cry and caught him in his arms, sought for a pulse and could find none, then fell to rubbing one of his cold hands his hardest. He cried out to me angrily to help him and not stand there crying. And to humor him, I did so. We worked over the cold rigid hands, no longer baby Dick, with the great staring eyes wide open and the cold rigid form as heavy as clay until the beads stood out on my face and ran down my cheek with the terror of it all,—the horror of the dead man's eyes, the weight of the dead man's hand. John worked with desperate energy, his teeth set tightly together and toward the last when he began to give up hope, his tired hands worked less swiftly and his lips breathed forth curses on the men who had killed his boy.

After awhile, it must have been an hour or two, the cold fingers in mine straightened out less rigidly and the eyelids closed slowly. He had not breathed for two hours, yet this spasmodic motion took place and who can say but that his spirit entered into its rest at that instant? John gave up the struggle then and dropped the lifeless hand. He threw himself down beside the bed and sobbed as any other

(Continued on page 4.)

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