

THE EVENING NEWS.

Wednesday, March 12, 1913.

[CONTINUED.]

RAFFLED VILLAINY.

A LAWYER AND HIS CLIENT.

CHAPTER II.

THE TEMPTRESS AND THE VICTIM.

When a man is bent upon villainy, he might as well give up all struggle with his conscience, for the simple reason that he will follow out his intention, despite all his convictions of the disgracefulness or criminality of his conduct. The inception of evil in thought is, in most cases, soon followed by evil in action. Let a man passively move over the possible consequences of a meditated wrong, and he will quickly put into force the active test. As "the woman who deliberates is lost," so the man who hesitates without resisting a temptation is certain to find himself drawn within the vortex of sin.

Reuben Spottier, though a slave to his passion, was far from being a criminal, and would, as a general thing, shrink from the perpetration of actual crime as the purest Christian on earth; but, like a vast number of men, he had an ethical code of his own in many respects, and might have been apt to designate while what a clearer moral vision would unhesitatingly pronounce black. So far as this is concerned, however, he was no exceptional case, since society has always been composed of a large percentage of an elastic moral material, that conveniently adapts itself more to expediency than integrity, and finds encouragement in every shifting phase of desire.

During five years after his marriage, Spottier might have been considered a happy man. He was then a successful mechanic, who, with constant employment, accompanied by liberal wages, had good reason to think that his lot had fallen in pleasant places, and to hope for still better fortune in the future. Apparently he had married after the choice of his heart, and truly Rachel Stark, who was the only daughter of a prosperous carpenter, Spottier's warm friend and fellow workman, appeared at the age of eighteen a most estimable young woman. Decidedly good looking, of an amiable disposition, and domestic habits, she was in every way suited to make a man's home a happy one, and this Spottier afterwards realized from experience. After a short time the husband's circumstances greatly improved, enabling him to start in business for himself, and subsequently to gratify a favorite ambition that had long possessed him to purchase a residence to which he would be proud to invite his many friends and acquaintances. A few years subsequently he was a millionaire.

No sooner, however, was the fruition of his hopes attained than the character of the man seemed to change. As with many another, prosperity was too much for his mental equilibrium. Coming to be gentle and affectionate, he became selfish and exacting. Towards his wife he was no longer the indulgent husband, but bore himself after the fashion of a cold-hearted master. There are many such, but he in time vied with the worst specimens of that class. Short of personal violence he omitted nothing that would annoy and outrage her feelings, and at last it appeared as if her presence so excited his temper as to almost deprive him of his reason. It is enough to say that many cases have been known in reference to their wives. Spottier, however, was far from insane.

There was too much method in his madness, too much villainy in his heart. With the means to gratify his passions, he formed acquaintances whose influence would inevitably lead him to disgrace and ruin. One was a woman, a widow, beautiful and dominating and fiendishly cunning, who flattered his vanity and aspired to his wealth. He was a weak child in her hand, ready to kiss the feet of the temptress, and as her influence over him grew his feelings toward his own wife became more dissatisfied, bitter and cruel.

A few evenings before the interview with Marcus Spearwell, the subject of divorce was first suggested to him by Mrs. Pendum, the beautiful widow whose society he was enjoying. She occupied expensive apartments in a street, and seemed possessed of ample funds for an extravagant mode of living, but as to her source of income Spottier was far too infatuated to think upon the subject at all. In his eyes she was bewitchingly lovely, and as pure as she was beautiful.

"Mr. Spottier, I have been seriously thinking about speaking to you," she commenced by saying, "and I deem it best to do so now. Have you ever considered that my character must suffer from your frequent visits here?"

"Suffer, Letitia?"

"Suffer, Letitia?"

"Suffer, Letitia?"

"Suffer, Letitia?"

"Suffer, Letitia?"

"Suffer, Letitia?"

To be continued.

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