

The Eternal
Magdalene

Robert H. McLaughlin

2d

75

THE ETERNAL MAGDALENE

ROBERT H. McLAUGHLIN

THE ETERNAL MAGDALENE

By ROBERT H. McLAUGHLIN

NEW YORK
THE MACAULAY COMPANY

Copyright, 1915,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

To

M. N. M.,

WHOSE SWIFT COMPASSION FOR THE UNFORTUNATE,
AND WHOSE BROAD TOLERANCE OF THE SINS
THAT FOLLOW IN MISFORTUNE'S WAKE,
ARE REFLECTED UPON MANY OF
ITS PAGES; THIS VOLUME
IS LOVINGLY
INSCRIBED.

2136947

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE HUNTING OF THE WOMAN - - -	11
II. THE UPRIGHT MAN - - -	31
III. YOUNG LOVE AT SPRING - - -	52
IV. THE BITTERNESS OF FATHER-LOVE - - -	62
V. THE WOMAN WHO DID NOT SMILE - - -	78
VI. THE CURSE - - -	90
VII. THE STORM-CLOUD - - -	105
VIII. A PRIESTESS OF APHRODITE IN A LIMOUSINE - - -	123
IX. GRAY THREADS OF A SPIDER-WEB - - -	142
X. THE YOUNG GENERATION - - -	160
XI. THE MOTH AND THE FLAME - - -	179
XII. THE BLACK DAYS - - -	195
XIII. THE GIRL WHO HAD BEEN PROTECTED - - -	211
XIV. A SINNER? - - -	227
XV. THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER - - -	243
XVI. THE REFORM BOOMERANG - - -	260
XVII. "HE THAT IS WITHOUT SIN——" - - -	272
XVIII. IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY - - -	286

THE ETERNAL MAGDALENE

THE ETERNAL MAGDALENE

CHAPTER I

THE HUNTING OF THE WOMAN

JOHAN BELLAMY had been connected with the *Star* in some editorial capacity or other for nearly nine years. When he graduated from High School at the age of eighteen, it had been his ambition to go to college, but his father had died suddenly during the vacation which had followed his commencement, and six months later, his mother, who had been unable to withstand the shock of her husband's death, succumbed, partly of a broken heart, partly of ill-health. Bellamy was then thrown on his own resources; his ambition was swallowed up in the necessity of making his own living. Duncan Harrison, the owner and proprietor of the largest and most influential newspaper in the city where Bellamy lived, had been an old and intimate friend of Bellamy's father, and it was natural that he should have taken the young man under his protection and made a place for him on the staff of his publication.

At first Bellamy had chafed under the routine, for it was not what he had planned for himself. But, as the years went by, the great newspaper game, with its struggles and its hardships, its interests and its rewards,

The Eternal Magdalene

had taken hold of him and fired his imagination. He came in touch with the undercurrents of life; the veil of hypocrisy was snatched from the external manifestations of existence; and Bellamy could look deep into the heart of the world, its high hopes and aspirations, its sordidness and its defeats, its struggles and achievements. More and more he felt that he was penetrating to the very heart of all human endeavour. Gradually he had acquired a truer perspective of things. He saw beneath the surface. And this vision, coupled with the constant battle which one day would bring success, another day defeat, gave a new colour and meaning to his life.

Many men, caught in the vortex of news-gathering, become cynical, but in the case of Bellamy this did not happen. To the contrary, that youthful buoyancy which had always been a part of his nature, became accentuated. His sympathies were intensified, and, far from losing that point of view which with him occasionally approached near the brink of sentimentality, he grew more tolerant of the human struggle.

His mind was quick and probing. He had rarely attached moral values to people's actions, but unconsciously had made allowances for the weaknesses which accompanied even the strongest natures. He weighed carefully all the problems which presented themselves to him, gave few hasty judgments, and developed an almost divine leniency toward people and their actions. It was not lack of strength; rather was his attitude the result of an inherent and deep understanding—an understanding made deeper by the organisation of his new environment. Then, again, there was a certain congenial element in the mechanism of his new line of endeavour. He had

The Hunting of the Woman

always been fond of writing. The instinct of visual thought had, from his earliest infancy, been part of him.

At first he had taken little interest in his work because his aspirations had been so passionate that he unconsciously revolted against the necessity of serving a tedious apprenticeship. In the beginning he had been given literary criticisms to do. He had had to rewrite and elaborate other men's stories; he had had to build up the flesh of narrative structures which at the last moment had come over the wires. But after a few years of such tasks he had been placed on the City Editor's staff and given assignments along with the other men whose business it was to go forth at a moment's notice and develop a story from a slender thread of suggestion.

Bellamy's manner was pleasing, his imagination active, his mind precise, and he had that inborn quality which animates all good writers for daily papers—a news sense. At this time he was only a "cub," and his assignments were not important, but his attitude was always fresh and original, and his stories had the charm of wonderment as of a child who looks for the first time upon the world. Instinctively he went to the heart of his story; he was able to eliminate the unimportant and unessential; and it was not long before he was given more valuable assignments.

In the years following his first real taste of newspaper life he had covered the City Hall, the Court House, the Police Courts, and at the end of his seventh year with the paper he was its chief political writer. But politics did not satisfy his eager appetite, and gradually he had worked himself into special stories which by their dra-

The Eternal Magdalene

matic simplicity, their colour, their true sense of balance and their descriptive brilliancy, had opened the eyes of Duncan Harrison to the fact that he was in possession of one of the best reporters in the country.

For two years thereafter Bellamy was called upon to cover every important case which found its way into the office. He wrote three-fourths of the feature stories for the *Star*, and whenever there was an assignment which required unusual perspicacity and intelligent treatment, he was chosen for it.

It was for this reason that, for a week past, Bellamy's time had been given over to writing up all the developments of the moral campaign which now occupied the foremost place in the interest of the quarter of a million inhabitants of the city.

For over a year Edenburg, like many other cities of its size and character, had been in a state of agitation over its morals. When the new reform administration had been inaugurated into office, the "cleaning up" of the Tenderloin had been promised. The local papers, avid for sensation and inspired more by a desire for circulation gains than by the spirit of cleanliness, had devoted considerable space to the question. Statistics were bandied about freely. Photographs of certain quarters of the city, which had heretofore been a closed book to the great majority of the population, were displayed on front pages. Politicians were interviewed. Their private actions were investigated and brazenly printed as news. The local clergymen, seeing a new field of endeavour opening up to them, founded their sermons on texts whose relevancy to the existing conditions was obvious, while some of the more radical and outspoken ministers painted lurid pictures each Sunday

The Hunting of the Woman

morning of the vice which was being condoned by the police.

The moral wave had grown and gathered momentum; accusations were hurled back and forth; all the details of civic sordidness and squalor became the familiar property of the man in the street. Investigating committees were formed. The names of men prominent in business life were connected with the crusade. Meetings were held and reports read. Quickly conceived and fantastic ordinances were presented to the City Council, and back of them were threats and promises.

Withal the campaign had made little headway. The mud in the spring had been stirred up, but it had not been eliminated. Influences and counter-influences were at work; the matter became almost inextricably involved, and the net results were meagre. The trouble lay in the fact that there was no dominating personality, no leader who could point the way, no man strong enough to carry forward to a conclusion the many activities which had been set in motion. To be sure, there were in the city certain men of powerful influence who perhaps could accomplish what the reformers demanded, but these men hesitated on the edge of final action. Their other interests intervened; and so the tumult went on with little or no definite achievement.

It was at this time, when the public interest and excitement was at its height, that Elijah Bradshaw proposed the hiring of a nationally famous professional reformer to gather up the loose ends of their work and to bring about a consummation. At one of the meetings of which he was chairman, he spoke eloquently of the need of such a man as the Reverend James Gleason, an evangelist whose life work it was to go from city

The Eternal Magdalene

to city, takes notes of the local conditions, and plan a practical campaign which would result in the purification which that city needed.

Jimmy Gleason, as he was called by every one, was not merely a theorist. He had made the study of municipal vice his profession, and he had perfected methods for its elimination which had produced practical results in every city which had secured his services. He was a vulgar man and uneducated, but he was possessed of the gift of simple and compelling oratory, of picturesque and insinuating diction. He knew all the ramifications, legal and psychological, which were demanded by his profession. In the newspapers he had received as much publicity as any other public citizen in the United States. He was a clever advertiser, a man who profoundly knew his public, and though his methods were such that he had made many enemies among the more conservative reformers, in point of results he had no competitor in his field. His price was high, but that price had grown out of his own achievement. Where other men failed he succeeded.

It was obvious that such a man as Jimmy Gleason was needed in Edenburg to complete the work already begun by the local reformers, and there was little hesitancy on the part of the other influential citizens in agreeing to send for him, once Elijah Bradshaw had suggested it and had agreed to guarantee the enterprise financially.

Bradshaw was a man who commanded the respect of all who knew him, and there were few in Edenburg who did not. He had lived in the city all his life. He was a leader in all civic and commercial undertakings. Edenburg in fact owed much to Bradshaw. He was one of its few millionaires, and he had made his money through

The Hunting of the Woman

honesty and hard work and business acumen. The interests of the city had always been his personal interests. He had given much to charity. One of the largest parks in Edenburg was Bradshaw's donation, and had been named after him. His family was prominent in the social life of the city. He was the head of the Board of Trustees of Edenburg's largest church. His life had been exemplary, and he had come to be looked upon as one of the founders of the city's prosperity. He had never run for office, although his success politically would have been assured. He contented himself with a semi-private life; and yet, despite his refusal to accept important political nominations, the people of Edenburg felt that they owed as much to him as if he had actively allied himself with its government.

It was not therefore inconsistent with his public-spirited attitude and his generosity that he alone should have offered to shoulder the entire financial responsibilities of carrying out on a big scale this new plan of reform, and of making it possible for the city to have the one man in America who was able to do the work which had now superseded all other local affairs in point of interest.

Jimmy Gleason, as a direct result of Elijah Bradshaw's suggestion, had been in Edenburg for a week, and his whirlwind campaign against the evils in that city was well under way. Because of the spectacular value of the campaign and because of the prominent men of the Bradshaw type who were back of it, the newspapers were lending every effort to put it through to a successful conclusion. Bellamy had attended all the meetings at the Tabernacle, had written columns upon columns of publicity, had taken into consideration its human side

The Eternal Magdalene

and had found and made many intimate stories of seemingly insignificant details which had been overlooked by his less imaginative and more cynical confrères.

Gleason had not confined himself entirely to preachments and exhortations. Already he had begun work on the more practical side of his crusade. He had demanded that the police give him assistance in closing up the houses of ill fame against which his slangy philippics had been hurled. Behind these raids was the influence of the newspapers and of those citizens who governed public opinion. The police, as always, were reluctant to carry out these drastic measures, but the pressure behind the demands was so strong that they had no alternative. Already two of the best-known Tenderloin establishments had been temporarily closed. The women had been taken into court and fined. The lessees of the houses had been dispossessed. Gleason himself had led the raids, and Bellamy had witnessed them at the evangelist's side. The young reporter had made little personal comment on the affair, but his stories of the episodes had been such that both Gleason and Bradshaw, as well as Duncan Harrison, had been more than well pleased.

On a night in late October, eight days after Jimmy Gleason had come to Edenburg, Bellamy sat at his desk in the *Star* office preparing a special feature story for the following Sunday edition. It was the first night since the vice crusade had started that he had not attended the meeting at the Tabernacle. The first cold breath of winter was in the air. A gusty wind had arisen earlier in the evening, and along the side streets where there were still trees to mark the rapidly passing youth of the city, the dry leaves were scurrying about.

The Hunting of the Woman

All day the sky had been overcast. A disconsolate autumn bleakness had settled over the city.

When Bellamy had finished his story he took it into Duncan Harrison's office and laid it on the desk.

The older man looked up.

"I was about to send for you, John," he said in the quick staccato voice which had been his great asset in making men obey his orders. "I've just received word from the Chief that Blanche Dumond's house is going to be pulled to-night. You know the old girl—a picturesque character. There ought to be a good story in it. Nobody has been tipped off, and if things go through smoothly it'll be a big haul. You'd better run over to Headquarters and go with the boys personally. Get your story, and taxi back to the office. We ought to have two columns on it. There'll be a photographer there, and we'll have a three-column lay-out. Write a banner head yourself and shoot the story down not later than one."

"I'm on," Bellamy replied breezily, "although, to tell you the truth, I don't like the whole business."

Bellamy had reached the point where he subordinated his private beliefs and prejudices to the policy of his paper. His loyalty to his publication and the public was unassailable, and although his experiences as a news-gatherer in all walks of life had taught him to see things clearly and to penetrate to the shams and hypocrisy which often underlay the real motives of many benefactions and philanthropies, in a crisis he would not have permitted this knowledge to jeopardise the paper to which he owed his allegiance. Despite this fact he was frank and fearless in his personal acts and beliefs.

Harrison looked at him a little quizzically.

The Eternal Magdalene

"Well, neither do I think much of it," he replied. "But, after all, we are not critics, but chroniclers."

"Perhaps so," Bellamy reluctantly agreed with a smile. "Only I'd like a chance to tell what I really think of the whole affair. Gleason's too cocksure. No one can tell whether he is fundamentally right or wrong—it's too big a problem to be decided off-hand. But I've seen some things happen here that I know are wrong. The theory back of them is sound, no doubt, but human nature is too complex to fit into an ethical theory."

"I know all that, my boy," Harrison responded good-naturedly, "but it's not our funeral. Our circulation this last week has taken a big jump."

"What would happen, sir," Bellamy asked deferentially, "if we should take an impartial or—let us say—a controversial stand on this business?"

"What!" exclaimed the older man. "With Bradshaw and the Citizens' Committee and all the ministers on the other side of the fence!"

He looked at Bellamy amusedly.

"You can write well enough, John," he added with a touch of condescension, "but I'm afraid you wouldn't be a good business man. The newspaper game, from the owner's standpoint, consists in knowing how to juggle a thousand balls. Diplomacy brings us our readers—not opinions. . . . Now get out of here and do the best that's in you. It looks like the biggest story so far in the crusade!"

Bellamy went to the telephone and called up the Chief of Police in order to make sure a seat would be saved for him in one of the machines. Then he put on his hat, buttoned his coat around him tightly, and went downstairs unenthusiastically.

The Hunting of the Woman

As he stepped out into the cold air he met Arnold Macy, who was on the point of entering the building. The young men were close friends; they had been in the same classes together at school. It was with Macy as a room-mate that Bellamy had planned his college career, but though Macy had possessed a measure of wealth, he had preferred spending it in travel rather than on a university training. When Bellamy had entered the employ of the *Star* Macy had sailed for Europe, and for five years thereafter the friendship of the young men had been kept alive through correspondence. During that time Macy had spent his money prodigally and in the end had been compelled to return to America. Again in Edenburg, he had entered a broker's office, and for nearly two years had made an excellent living as a bond salesman.

"I was just coming up to see you," Macy greeted Bellamy cheerily. "Are you busy to-night?"

"Always busy with Jimmy Gleason in town," the other returned. "I am his chief press agent, you know. There's going to be another raid to-night, and I'm on my way over to cover it now. If you've nothing better to do, why don't you come along?"

"Nothing I'd like better," Macy replied. "Can you take me without any trouble?"

"The Chief's my friend," Bellamy replied airily. "He has an idea that if he isn't good to me he may lose his next appointment. Publicity, newspaper influence—all that sort of thing. Why, he's even going to take me to the raid to-night in his own car. If you don't mind sitting on my lap, I'll make him let you in."

"This will be my first experience at eye-witnessing the clash of the powers of evil against the hosts of

The Eternal Magdalene

righteousness," Macy remarked as they walked briskly toward the Police Station.

Bellamy had no trouble in taking his guest along with him. The Chief of Police had assented good-naturedly. Bellamy was an influential publicist, besides being liked by the Chief personally.

"How do you like all the new excitement?" Bellamy asked of the grizzled old officer who, on this occasion, was more silent than was his wont.

"I'm not saying anything, son," the old man answered after a pause. "I've seen too much of this thing before in my day; but if this is what they want, I'll give it to 'em right. I'm not the Mayor or the head of the Police Commission. I take my orders and do the best job I can."

"What is the system in these raids?" asked Macy.

"Well, they vary," the Chief explained. "We surround the house generally, force an entrance, rustle the girls into patrols, and give 'em a joy-ride to the night court. That's the way it always used to be when the reformers made so much noise that we had to do something to shut 'em up. The Madam, of course, paid the girls' fines, and the next night everything was running the same as ever. But this Gleason has got some new ideas. Now we not only arrest the girls, but throw 'em out, bag and baggage, close the house, and then keep on pulling the girls wherever we find 'em. The second time they don't get off with a fine. They get sent up. The idea now is to run 'em out of town."

"Isn't dispossession under those circumstances illegal?" inquired Macy.

"Sure it is; but what are the girls to do about it?"

The Hunting of the Woman

The old Chief turned and looked at the young man. "These girls haven't got any rights in court. None of 'em dare make a fight. The landlords don't kick; you'd be surprised if you knew who some of 'em were. The whole thing's one-sided; the girls haven't got a chance. They make the best of it by scattering or going to another town."

"You'll see how it is to-night," Bellamy put in to Macy. "There'll be men stationed at every exit so none of the girls can escape. Then a squad will enter the house, drag the inmates out, pack them in the wagons while the crowd gathers. The Madam may protest, but that's all the good it'll do her."

"Sounds like great sport," commented Macy, trying with great difficulty to light a cigarette against the wind.

Bellamy looked at his friend sharply, and a slight frown darkened his forehead. Something in the other's tone displeased him.

"Yes, it will be sport," he commented dryly. "But it will be the saddest, cruelest sport you've ever looked on at. Here are these girls, without money, thrown out into the streets and hounded out of town. They haven't a friend in the world; everybody is their enemy. Even the men and saloonkeepers who make a living off of them use every trick they know to swindle them. Talk about your Roman circuses and your Neronian orgies! Believe me, Arnold, this new form of sport isn't lacking in racy cruelty. I'll grant we would be better off without these girls, but it seems to me there ought to be a less heartless way out of it. Somehow I can't get my mind in the attitude to see the justice of it all."

The machine was drawing near to the railway station

The Eternal Magdalene

at not too high a speed to attract attention. They were already in a poor and sordid part of the city. The houses were old and ramshackle, and the streets were ill-kempt and rough. Turning by the station, they went north into Bridge Street. There were several factories ahead of them, and in between there stood several old residences which, even in their present squalid surroundings, attested to a bygone splendour. The shades of these houses were all drawn. Here and there could be discerned tiny cracks of orange light where the shades had blown away from the windows. The entrances to the houses were dark and inhospitable save for a tiny red light which hung immediately above the number. On nearly every corner of Bridge Street was a noisy, garish saloon.

"We'll wait here a minute until the rest of the boys come up." The old Chief spoke quietly and glanced at his watch. "Dumond's joint is the brick house just the other side of the gas jet." He pointed down the street to an old four-story dwelling house, about midway of the block.

Hardly had the words left his mouth when another machine drove up. In it were several plainclothes men, a sergeant in uniform and two patrolmen.

The sergeant jumped out and came to the Chief.

"The wagons are round the corner," he said in a guarded tone, saluting. "I told the boys to wait for the whistle."

"All right, O'Connor," said his superior officer. "How about Gleason? Is he on the job as usual?"

"Sure he is," laughed the sergeant. "You couldn't keep him away with a team of mules. That must be him and a couple of his henchmen down there in the

The Hunting of the Woman

doorway." He pointed to the factory opposite the gas jet, where three figures were standing in the shadow. An empty taxicab waited nearby.

"Well, don't get him sore," the Chief admonished, with irritation, and there was in his voice a sign of suppressed antagonism for the man of whom he was speaking. "If he doesn't get all the credit for this to-night, he will raise the devil with the police and we will have more trouble than we've got now. . . . Send three of your men up the alley to cover the fire-escapes. Take three of 'em and come with me. We'll tackle the front."

A hurrying taxicab drew up suddenly and three young men jumped out. They were joined by two other young men with cameras.

"We're just in time for the first act," said one of them, laughingly. Then he caught sight of Bellamy and greeted him pleasantly. They were police reporters and photographers from the other papers.

"This town is a regular one-ring circus," remarked the old Chief gruffly, as he gave a signal to the chauffeur.

As the machine stopped suddenly in front of Blanche Dumond's house, the three figures who had been waiting in the doorway opposite came across. One was Gleason. With him were the Reverend Birmingham Smollet and Judge Amos Bascomb, both leaders and co-workers in the campaign.

"Howdy, Chief!" exclaimed Gleason, slapping the old man on the shoulder. "No fouls to-night, now! A safe infield hit'll slam us on third. Then it'll be a cinch to steal home."

The sombre old Chief of Police nodded without replying, and with his men walked quietly up the stone stairs of Madam Dumond's. He knocked on the door loudly,

The Eternal Magdalene

and one of the panels swung back, making a rectangle of yellow on the deep grey of the house.

"Open up, Blanche," came the Chief's voice, grave and peremptory. "I'm sorry, but it's got to be done. And there's no chance for any getaways. Come, open up like a good girl and save us the trouble of breaking in."

As the door was thrown open, the sergeant blew a shrill call on his whistle. There was a sound of hurrying horses and revolving wheels at both corners of the street. The Chief and the men had scarcely entered the house when three patrol wagons were backed into place.

"You, McCurdy and Elliott, look upstairs," ordered the Chief.

He himself with one of the men turned into the room at one side of the hall, while the sergeant and two other men took the opposite door.

Blanche Dumond had not spoken a word. She still stood with her hand on the door-knob, looking on at the drama with an expression of dignified and almost philosophical amusement. There was no surprise in her expression. She was a tall, graceful woman and showed no outward signs of her profession save in her eyes, which were cold and penetrating. There was even a refinement in her manner and bearing. As the scantily attired girls, one after another, were roughly thrown through the door and shoved into the yawning wagons, she gave them a smile of calm assurance, as if she was sorry for their fate and wished to promise, without words, that she would do all she could for them.

Scarcely had the wagons appeared in front of the house when a crowd began to gather. It was only a little after midnight and the nearby saloons had been well filled by the motley hangers-on of the Tenderloin. All of them

The Hunting of the Woman

had poured out at the first signal, and now stood about the wagons looking on with morbid curiosity. There were women too in the gathering—denizens of the all-night cafés. Their faces were serious and fearful, as if they sensed in the event before them a presage of their own fate. The men, for the most part, however, were jocular. There was noisy laughter among them, hooting, cat-calls and jeers. As they recognised certain of the women who were being arrested they greeted them good-naturedly, calling them by name and commenting facetiously on their tragedy. A man now and then signalled seriously to one of the girls, making pantomime gestures indicative of his intention to help her later. Several of the older men—political bosses in their little circles—commented sarcastically on the moralists who had instigated the proceedings.

The girls themselves were, as a whole, silent. They accepted their fate stolidly as something not altogether unexpected. They were used to being brow-beaten by society; no cruelty from the world of respectability would have astonished them. So long had they been told through the papers that they were outcasts that they had come to believe it themselves; and, as outcasts, they knew they could expect no consideration or quarter. Their shame, too, had disappeared. They did not shrink from the glances of the curious bystanders: they were public in every sense of the word. One or two of them protested at the manner in which they were handled; but they knew their protestations were futile, and there was a brazen sense of comedy beneath their words. They were acquainted with most of the officers personally and called them by their first names when addressing them.

Gleason, the Reverend Smollet and Judge Bascomb

The Eternal Magdalene

stood together, looking on intently, passing indistinguishable remarks to one another. They seemed well pleased with what was taking place, and occasionally Gleason would smile with satisfaction as an officer forestalled the attempt of a girl to wrench herself free from her captor's hold.

In the yard at the foot of the steps the newspaper men were grouped. If they saw any humour in the happenings before them there was no indication of it on their faces. None of them had spoken; one or two made hurried notes on a piece of folded copy-paper. An occasional flash of illumination told that the newspaper photographers were not idle, although no one paid the slightest attention as the flash-lights were taken. The police were used to it, and the girls did not care.

The last girl to be taken from the house struggled furiously. There was an officer on either side of her, and she hung between them with her legs drawn up so that it was with difficulty that she was carried along. Her language was violent—the heated expression of her anger.

"Thought you'd hide from us, did you, Mabel?" one of the officers was saying with a kind of triumphant amusement.

The girl ignored his taunt and began screaming and struggling anew.

Her blasphemies were drowned by the jeers of the crowd.

"Say, you!" roared the old Chief. "Shut up!"

"Shut up?" cried the girl. "I've only just begun. . . . I thought you and Billy was my friends. Well, I'm not through with you yet. I've got a few things to tell when I get a chance."

The Hunting of the Woman

"Don't take it so hard, girlie," Blanche Dumond said to her serenely, as the other was being dragged across the porch.

"You're a swell madam, you are!" the girl flung back at her angrily. "Not having enough pull with the police to be tipped off! Huh!"

Blanche Dumond looked at her sadly and said nothing.

"Come on, you little devil!" snarled one of the officers.

The girl had managed to get hold of the porch railing and clung to it desperately. She was roughly jerked free, and again she burst forth in a wild paroxysm of threats.

The crowd now was laughing, yelling and whistling in derision, like the excited spectators at a prize fight. Belamy and Macy were standing very close to her. They could see her distinctly by the light of the gas jet, and could hear her words. She was a pretty girl and did not look over seventeen years old. Her features were pretty but heavy, dark-tinted with olive, and her cheeks were red enough without the use of rouge. She resembled the women of Spain or Southern Italy. Her hair was long and black and hung down her back in disarray. Her eyes were unusually large.

As she pulled herself around to hurl a final sneer at Blanche Dumond, she caught sight of Gleason looking at her complacently. Suddenly she drew herself up and narrowed her eyes.

"So, there you are, you hypocrite!" she screamed, shaking her fist at him. "You're to blame for this. But you wait; I'll fix you—and I'll fix you right, you four-flusher, you beast! . . . Nobody was troubling you—and I'll get even with you, remember that! . . . My name's Mabel Mordaunt, and don't you forget it. . . . I know your kind. You just wait, you——"

The Eternal Magdalene

The officers lifted her up bodily and forced her into the wagon, where she broke down and cried hysterically.

Blanche Dumond was put into the wagon next to her. She was quiet, even a little proud, and something in her manner made the officer release her arm as she stepped firmly to her seat. She was still calm and composed. Both Bellamy and Macy saw her put her arm around the weeping girl's shoulder and speak comfortingly. Then the two young men turned again into the house.

The lights were being put out. The Chief himself was the last to leave. He closed the doors personally and ordered one of his men to nail on an emergency lock. Then he turned with a slight shrug of the shoulders and waved his arm to the drivers to be off.

Gleason rubbed his hands together with satisfaction.

"Are you sure you nabbed them all, Chief?" he asked with satisfied jocularly. "None of 'em hidin' in ward-robes?"

"I think we got 'em all, Mr. Gleason," the old man replied with dignity.

"And have you got all the men?"

The Chief merely nodded as he stepped down the stairs and gave his orders to his men.

The crowd dispersed, muttering and commenting incoherently. The windows along the streets were slammed down. The newspaper men jumped into their machines and drove quickly away.

"Hurry me back to the office, will you, Chief?" asked Bellamy. "I've got to write a lurid account of this escapade of Gleason's."

The old man merely grunted as he mounted his car and told the driver to hurry to the *Star* office.

CHAPTER II

THE UPRIGHT MAN

THE following evening Elijah Bradshaw sat in his study working upon a statement for the newspapers. He was a large, severe man, typical of the American captain of industry. His hair was slightly grey and his features were straight and implacable. He was smoothshaven and had quiet, dominating eyes, a strong, powerfully built nose, a firm, broad mouth, and a square, protruding chin. His face was rugged and creased. Worry and hard work had given it an impervious character. It was by no means a vicious face and there were undeniable marks of good breeding in it. His eyes and mouth were slightly cruel, like those of a man who had fought hard and had put self-preservation above all else.

In his office and in his home he ruled with an iron hand. His opinions had all been formed, and he would not listen to argument. He was proud, and with his inferiors a little overbearing; but he had qualities which commanded respect and admiration. He dressed well but never foppishly. His parents had been poor, but they had possessed a degree of culture, and though Elijah Bradshaw had built his own fortune through hard work and competition, he had lost little of his inherent refinement and suavity.

His ideal was success, and he had no patience with

The Eternal Magdalene

men who failed. He lived by a strict moral code which he enforced among his employés and in his home. In his religion he was orthodox, just as he was in his business. He had never deliberately done a dishonest act, not, perhaps, because of any innate scrupulousness, but because he had always been taught that honesty was the best policy. This teaching had become a belief with him and finally a conviction.

Morally he was not abnormal. In his youth he had sown his wild oats, but since his marriage (which took place in his late twenties) he had not deviated from the world's ethical and moral standards. He hated sin both in the abstract and in the individual, for it spelled to him a weakness which he could not tolerate. To him it was synonymous with inefficiency and therefore not to be condoned any more than he would condone commercial inefficiency.

His position in the life of Edenburg was an established one. He was envied and looked up to. His name on any public enterprise was a guarantee that the enterprise would be accepted respectfully; and when a dominating personality was needed to head the Citizens' Committee in their investigations of the local vice conditions, there was no other man but Elijah Bradshaw whose name would have carried with it such weight and dignity. Furthermore, he was personally in sympathy with the aims of the Committee. He was a religious man and not only attended church regularly himself but demanded the same from all members of his family.

His wife was a quiet, sweet, competent woman, admired and loved by all who knew her. She was fifty-five, Bradshaw's junior by five years. She had been poor when he married her, and she loved him with an

The Upright Man

all-embracing affection. She had taken part in her husband's early struggles, had followed him sympathetically in every advance, had helped him and worked for him. She was his best ally, and over and beyond her love she was also his most enthusiastic admirer. She was practical and sane in all things, tender and loving, and her participation in the local charities was animated by a genuine desire to help those who were in need.

Although in later years her husband had become wealthy Martha Bradshaw had never become a social climber in any sense of the word. She received into her home the best element in Edenburg, and her presence was sought after by those who made social activities their one aim in life. But under all circumstances she was the same—simple, genuine, spontaneous, unaffected. She preferred, as she had always done, her own home and its responsibilities to the usual social diversions of the other women with whom she associated. She had no great animating interest in life aside from her husband and the two children whom she had reared tenderly and affectionately. She was a comely woman with sensitive features and a pleasing and unstudied manner. Judged by modern standards, she was a trifle old-fashioned.

Her son and her daughter were now grown. Elizabeth was eighteen; Paul was twenty-four; but the motherly instinct in Martha Bradshaw had never diminished. Elizabeth and Paul were still children to her, and she looked after them with the intimate care she had always given them. For this reason, perhaps, both of them were somewhat spoiled. Paul had just graduated from a local university, and through his father's influence had been given a responsible position in a large local bank. He dressed stylishly and carried himself in a manner which

The Eternal Magdalene

suggested a proud, well-schooled and worldly-wise youth. He had imbibed many of the newer ideas, and there was a continual temperamental clash between him and his father. There was a streak of wildness in his nature, and back of it was the confidence of his position.

Elizabeth was a beautiful girl. She attracted the attention of all with whom she came in contact and was universally popular in the younger set. She had inherited from her mother traits of tenderness and compassion as well as a simple sweetness and faith which she always retained even when under the influence of the frivolous young people to whom she had taken a liking ever since her graduation from an exclusive Edenburg boarding-school.

These four constituted the Bradshaw household.

Elijah Bradshaw spent his money freely on his family, buying for them the best that could be had and taking a pride in his expenditures. In the matter of personal bank accounts he was strict. His son had a good position, and he believed that outside of the home the young man should live within his means and should make his own fortune or fail according to his abilities.

In his recent activities Bradshaw had been influenced largely by a desire to protect his children. In his son he had absolute confidence, and in his daughter also; but he believed that, were all evil influences removed, it would be better for both of them. He had often said to his business associates: "The cleaner the town, the cleaner its people." And when he had applied this maxim to his own immediate family circle, it had taken on a new meaning and had inspired him with a desire to eliminate every vicious commodity which might at some time or other react upon his children.

The Upright Man

Following out this same desire, he had always been unusually strict with them. He allowed his daughter but few liberties, attempting to mould her into the pattern of his wife. His ambition was that some day his son Paul would step into his own place; and when he should be too old to carry on the battle, he hoped the young man would shoulder the burden of responsibility. He made no allowances for the social changes which had swept over the world since he was young. In all his dealings with his children he had unconsciously patterned his actions on those of his own father.

As he sat at his desk the night after the raid on Blanche Dumond's house, preparing a statement, he was unconsciously doing what he thought best for his own flesh and blood. After a half hour's work he glanced at the clock and rang for the butler.

"Otto," he said, when the man entered, "I am expecting the Reverend Smollet and Mr. Gleason to-night. When they come, please show them in to me at once."

He then resumed his work.

A half hour later the Reverend Mr. Smollet was announced. He walked in confidently and extended his hand with effusive friendliness. He was a man in the neighbourhood of forty-five, the pastor of Bradshaw's church and the most influential minister of the Gospel in Edenburg. He belonged to the new school of ministers, was alert, fearless, frank, outspoken and, from the conventional point of view, broad-minded. There was about him an air of prosperity. He was, in fact, subsidised by his wealthy parishioners and had the largest and costliest church in the city. His sermons were always on modern themes, and even in the pulpit he dressed smartly, so that he looked more like a well-groomed

The Eternal Magdalene

businessman than an orthodox clergyman. He had a frank, insinuating manner which was calculated to impress the casual person with a sense of unalterable confidence and genuine sincerity.

"I'm sorry I'm late, Bradshaw," he said, sitting down. "Gleason will be with us in a few minutes. We ran into a lot of reporters up the street, and they held him up. The man's personality is simply astonishing. It was a master idea of yours to get him for Edenburg. If he cannot crown our campaign with success the case is indeed hopeless. His methods may be questionable, but after all it is results which count. Don't you think so?"

"If a man's methods are honest," Bradshaw answered a little sententiously, "we can well overlook his mannerisms. . . . I saw by the papers that another nail was driven into the coffin of the Tenderloin last night."

Smollet beamed. "More than a nail," he said pleasantly.

"In fact, a bolt was put on literally and figuratively. The raid went through in short order. Gleason and I and the Judge were there and marvelled at the smoothness with which the business was carried through. As I said to Gleason: 'It's not that we haven't a capable police force; it's the moral apathy of the public.' In twenty minutes one of the most notorious and disgraceful houses in the city was emptied and locked up. And there wasn't a hitch—no trouble. It was accomplished quietly and with despatch. Only one of the girls tried to make a scene—a little girl; looked like a foreigner. You should have heard her threaten and scream. She actually shook her fist at Gleason; told him he must never forget her name; said it was Mabel Mordaunt and that he would hear from her again." Smollet laughed quietly.

The Upright Man

"Such things are to be expected, of course. . . . And by the way, that was a first-rate story young Bellamy wrote for the *Star* this morning. He told me you were preparing a statement for that paper. How goes it?"

Bradshaw gathered up from his desk some loose pieces of paper on which was a great deal of writing.

"It's to be a kind of résumé," he said. "The papers seem to think that I should give them a personally signed statement. Perhaps, after all, it is a good idea. Gleason isn't one of our citizens, you know, and maybe it would have more weight coming from me. Just a minute ago the *Star* 'phoned me, asking if I would hurry it up for them. However, I think I'll hold it up a few days until we are further along in the campaign. This isn't quite the psychological moment. What do you think of it?"

"Perhaps you are right," Smollet agreed. "Our work is only well begun. We may need it later as a kind of wedge to pry up some of the indifference in certain quarters. You are making it strong?"

Bradshaw smiled confidently and glanced down at the pages in his hand.

"You may rest assured of that, my dear Smollet. This is no time for half measures. I feel that the thing must be done now or never. I am preparing the statement as a kind of final blow at segregated vice in this city, and I realise that it must come straight from the shoulder. There are too many factions working against us. Do you know, Smollet, that I am inclined to believe that the Mayor and the Chief of Police are not as enthusiastic about it as we have a right to expect?"

"Neither one of them would dare go against us," the other assured him. "Didn't we help put the Mayor in

The Eternal Magdalene

office? He has his eye on the next election, too, I'll warrant. If he antagonises us now it will go hard for him later." He rubbed his hands together almost ecstatically. "What a victory!" he commented, as if to himself. "What a victory!"

Bradshaw arose and advanced toward the other.

"Victory, yes; I think we can almost call it that, even now. But, at that, we mustn't give the Mayor a chance to recant. That's the reason I'm getting this paper ready. The minute I see signs of weakening on his part it will go into every newspaper in the city. After his reading it I doubt if he would have the nerve to go against us. At all events we must clinch the thing. We must apply the 'sleep wallop,' as Gleason would say."

Both men laughed a little.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Smollet, beaming. "I've always held that all the church needed were up-to-date business methods."

Bradshaw sat down again at his desk and arranged the papers before him. "Would you like to hear some of what I have written? The report will be brief—comparatively brief, that is—but to the point."

"By all means," replied Smollet enthusiastically, drawing up his chair. "Let me hear what you have written."

Bradshaw began reading. "To the people of Edenburg: As Chairman of the Citizens' Committee, I desire now to congratulate the members of this community on the great victories which they have won and are winning over the powers of Satan. The final and inevitable elimination of the segregated vice district, which, from every indication, will be but a matter of a short time, will crown with success the crusade which we have

The Upright Man

waged for weeks prayerfully and, with God's help, potently. Already the doors have been closed on many of the dens of depravity which have so long corrupted our city; and it is safe to predict at this time that within the next fortnight all of these dens will be driven out of business and that their shameless inmates will no longer menace the youth of our city. . . .”

“And you are right,” interrupted Smollet heartily. “It will be in even less than a fortnight though, or I greatly err in my estimation of Gleason's ability.”

“So much the better then,” Bradshaw answered. “But it would not do to be too sanguine. I have endeavoured throughout this statement to be at least conservative. Here, however, is a passage which I think will forestall any backsliding on the Mayor's part. Listen: ‘As head of this Committee I have been subjected to much criticism by sentimentalists who profess to believe that these women have certain rights, that they should be coddled and pampered and paraded as martyrs. I am disturbed by no such convictions. When a leper comes into our midst the law does not inquire how he came to be a leper, but it says: “Banish him instantly.” So say I of moral lepers. I believe in giving sin no quarter, in holding no parley with evil-doers. A clean sweep of the Tenderloin has been my goal in this fight, and I praise God that we are on the eve of victory. Too often have we been told that such a campaign as ours was impracticable, that it was impossible to suppress the viciousness which has been flourishing; but that statement is no more than a superstition, as has already been proved by the fact that a good portion of the Tenderloin is already closed and deserted. When the inmates of these houses begin to realise that their position here is

The Eternal Magdalene

dangerous and that they will be shown no consideration and are unable to demand protection from the police, they will go elsewhere, and those of them who brazenly remain, hoping for leniency, will be forcibly ejected. That has already been the case in several instances. I seriously doubt if there are a dozen men or women in the entire community who, in his or her heart, at least, is not in sympathy with our great and purifying work. The dissenters are, almost without exception, from that class of people who, either for personal or business reasons, profit by the presence of these women. But they are no better than the women themselves.' ”

Bradshaw looked up in time to receive a nod of approbation from the Reverend Smollet.

“You see,” he explained, “I am, in a way, putting the people of this city on their honour. You might say I am classifying them. But I am not even leaving it at that. I shall take no chances with the political ring at the Court House. I make a direct appeal to the Mayor.” He cast his eyes again to the loose papers in his hand and began to read: “I take this occasion to thank the Mayor and members of the Committee who, to a man, have given and are giving their best efforts to this cause, and to all others who, by their encouragement and prayers, have assisted us in our fight!”

“Excellent!” Smollet smiled reassuringly. “But what did you say of Gleason?”

“This,” said the other, reading: “‘But most of all I wish to thank the Reverend James Gleason, the great evangelist whose inspiring words have awakened this city to a realisation of its sinfulness, and whose fearless actions have gone so far toward a practical consummation of the desires of every decent-minded citizen. With-

The Upright Man

out the Reverend Gleason no such crusade as ours could be triumphantly accomplished.' ”

Bradshaw laid the papers to one side.

Smollet said nothing for a moment. It was obvious that something had displeased him.

Bradshaw looked at him closely and asked, “What did you think of it?”

The other merely inquired in return: “Is that all of your statement?”

A shrewd smile spread over Bradshaw's face. He understood Smollet's disquietude.

“No, no, of course not,” he said. “What I read you is a mere beginning. As I go along I shall review every phase of the movement from its inception; and rest assured, my dear sir, that I shall see you get full credit for your part in it.”

Smollet pretended not to be affected by that for which he had been listening all along.

“I have really done nothing worth speaking of,” he said carelessly.

“Ah! but you have!” Bradshaw insisted. “My friend, you are the real pioneer. That series of sermons you preached last year set the ball rolling.”

“I beg of you!” protested the other.

“And surely you have not forgotten your New Year's Eve grillroom expeditions—your exposé of the dance halls, the poolroom, the theatres. . . .”

“My dear Bradshaw!” Smollet held up his hand deprecatingly.

“Those sermons were the sparks that set off this town's moral magazine.”

The minister brightened and sat up a trifle straighter in his chair.

The Eternal Magdalene

"I'm overjoyed to know that you think so," he said, with an attempt at modesty. "But you, Bradshaw—without you and your great generosity and influence it all would have been impossible. Even in my little expeditions, as you call them, I attained no final results. In a month things were as bad as they ever were. I didn't have you behind me then."

"But now we are all together," the other man said confidently. "You, in a measure, furnish the prestige, and aid by your sermons and personal energies. Gleason is the dynamic factor. He is the man at the wheel who assumes the responsibility and steers the ship to safety. All that I have really done is to put up the money. But, after all, that too was necessary. One cannot expect a man like Gleason to work for nothing. But I am wealthy enough—and how could any man spend money to better purpose? I don't regret a dollar of it."

Smollet advanced and shook the other's hand.

"I know you don't, Bradshaw, and your attitude is anything but commercial. Behind it is a high and noble spirit. This work will be a lasting monument to you, and rightly so."

Mrs. Bradshaw had come quietly downstairs and now stood in the doorway looking in upon the two men. During her husband's crusade she herself had taken a hand; that is, she had interested herself in the problem from the women's point of view. With two women friends of hers who were closely associated with her in her charity work, she had gone personally into the slums and the Tenderloin, making inquiries, discussing matters with the women, and doing what she could to alleviate their conditions.

For weeks she had worked hard. Whenever she had

The Upright Man

found sickness and disease, she had telephoned for her own doctor to come down and give her assistance. Where she had found poverty and want she had contributed judiciously from her own funds. In a feminine way she had studied the environmental conditions of those people whom her husband sought to drive from the city. She had attended the local Missions, and on two occasions had appeared in the night court. Through a lawyer whom she had taken with her she had arranged bail for two of the girls who had been deserted by their protectors. These girls she had cared for afterwards. She had bought them clothes, and through her influence had secured them positions.

The work in its externals had been distasteful to her. She received from it little satisfaction from the standpoint of the morbid interest which motivated the actions of many of the women who worked among the cast-aways of society. However, she wanted to do good, and her capability and practicality were valuable assets. She was not a strong woman physically, and the work had been tiring, but she had been willing, even eager, to continue it, for she felt that it was for the best, and that she was needed. She avoided publicity as much as possible. She had a genuine distaste for the spectacular and flamboyant accounts in the newspapers of the charitable activities of prominent society women.

Her husband at first had tried to discourage her. He did not believe in her methods. His attitude toward social problems was more rigorous and severe. He was sceptical as to the beneficial results of gentleness in dealing with the members of the underworld. But so persistent had Mrs. Bradshaw been that he ceased his ob-

The Eternal Magdalene

jections, and went ahead with the campaign in his own manner, leaving his wife to do what good she could according to her vision.

As she entered the room that night, she was a trifle pale. She had had a busy and trying day, and her health had begun to give way under the strain. She greeted the Reverend Smollet pleasantly, and sat down near her husband.

"You are going to the Tabernacle, aren't you?" he asked her.

"Of course," she replied at once, as if there should have been no doubt in his mind concerning it, but her voice was a little tired.

She turned to the Reverend Smollet.

"I haven't missed one of the meetings yet. I wish every one in Edenburg could say as much."

"Well, my record is perfect," the minister replied lightly. "I am on my way there now. I was waiting here for Gleason."

"I am glad he's coming here, if only for a minute," Mrs. Bradshaw returned quietly. "He hasn't been here for nearly a week. But I suppose he's terribly busy. When my little work takes so much time I can well imagine that he hasn't a minute to spare, with all the big things he's doing. . . . What a wonderful man he is! And tireless, it seems. Somehow I don't see how he stands it."

Smollet smiled. "Neither does any one else. He's a human dynamo—one might almost say a human perpetual-motion machine. But you too are kept busy, Mrs. Bradshaw. In the papers this afternoon I saw that you and some of the other ladies from the church had visited the unfortunate women again to-day. . . .

The Upright Man

Tell me, just what do you think of their situation? A woman's point of view is always valuable."

Mrs. Bradshaw frowned and looked troubled for a moment. She was thinking of some of her recent experiences, and the memory troubled her.

"I don't know what to make of them," she at length answered slowly. "I am completely upset over the whole matter. Only last night I told Elijah that I couldn't make up my mind whether or not we were doing just the right thing—the Christian thing—in driving them out."

She looked inquiringly at the man to whom she was speaking and then turned to her husband.

Smollet cleared his throat a little, and after a slight hesitation said politely: "Really, your words astonish me, Mrs. Bradshaw. I was under the impression that we were following the only true Christian course in stamping sin out of our midst at any cost. But tell me, what has happened to make you feel like this?"

Bradshaw, seeing that his wife was in a quandary, felt called upon to say something.

"I think," he put in pleasantly, "that perhaps Martha has a touch of that sentimentality I referred to in this." He indicated the pile of papers from which he had recently read excerpts.

Mrs. Bradshaw smiled faintly.

"Call it what you like," she said, in a tone of tender resignation. "Perhaps it is sentimentality—perhaps it is something else. Only I have talked to a great many of these women. . . ." She paused, and then added: "They are all so different from what I had been led to expect."

"In what way are they different?" It was Smollet who put the question.

The Eternal Magdalene

"Well, they are human," explained the woman, "and I had hardly thought of them in that light. You see, we read such terrible things about them in the newspapers, and when I have heard you and my husband speak of them I got the impression that they are not like other women. . . . Do you know, I have met scarcely one of them in my whole experience who is not supporting children, or an old father or mother, or is not taking care of sick relatives—— Oh, I know what you are going to say," she continued hurriedly, raising her hand. "You are going to accuse them of telling me untruths for the sake of arousing sympathy. But I did not learn this from the girls themselves. I learned it from the women who ran the places, and I have seen letters some of them have received." She looked quickly at the two men to see how they would receive her remarks.

Her husband did not reply, and the Reverend Smollet, feeling her inquiring eyes on him, said in a flat, noncommittal voice: "Well, that may be barely possible."

The woman then went on: "I talked a long time to one girl, and I know she is not altogether vicious. She was pretty and there was something sweet about her expression. She had brown eyes and the face of a little child. Do you know what she told me? She said, 'I got into this life rather by degrees, and if I ever get out of it, it will be in the same way.' Of course I could give her no comfort or hope, knowing what Elijah's and Mr. Gleason's plans were. Even to-night she may be locked up in jail with no chance of getting out of her present life—by degrees. I offered to help her financially, but she said she couldn't accept any help—that it wouldn't do her any good anyway. I think she meant it would be

The Upright Man

taken away from her. What she wanted, I believe, was something that wasn't measured by money."

Neither of the men spoke. Elijah Bradshaw tapped quietly on the desk. It was an indication—known to all his business associates—that he was irritated and annoyed.

"At another house," the woman went on, "we heard of a poor girl who is soon to become a mother. I had never thought of one of those girls as a mother. Somehow the wonder of motherhood seemed so far removed from anything in their sordid lives. We went to the woman in charge of the house and offered to take care of the girl. It was all we could do. But even that was not permitted us. 'No, thank you,' the woman said to us, somewhat coldly. 'Don't let such things as that worry you. The girl will be cared for. The Tenderloin takes care of its own. . . . Even we—good people—don't always go as far as that.'"

"They have their own system of ethics, I imagine." It was Elijah Bradshaw who spoke. "Those are minor things—a sort of honour among thieves. The whole question goes much deeper than that."

"I suppose it does." His wife's tone was hopeless. "Everything I've done has seemed so futile. Everywhere we went to-day we were treated civilly, but coldly. It was the same story over and over again. They didn't want money; they didn't want anything that we could do for them in that way. What they seemed to want was human compassion—a chance. We could make no headway. I have a feeling to-night as if our mission had been a failure."

"It serves you right." Bradshaw's tone, for the first time during the interview, was stern. "I told you not to

The Eternal Magdalene

go prowling around down there. Those people are beyond help. Their sense of decency is dead. They belong to the pest-house, and the sooner they are sent there, the better."

Mrs. Bradshaw drew herself up as if she resented her husband's words, and when she spoke, her voice had lost its tentativeness.

"I am not so sure, Elijah," she said, looking straight at him. "My experience to-day has given me a broader vision. I have come to the conclusion that I am no better than the women of the underworld, only that I have been more fortunate than they in that circumstances have not at any time put me face to face with the necessity of earning my living—in their way." Then she cautioned quickly: "Don't misunderstand me—nor you either, Dr. Smollet."

She turned for a moment to the other man and then faced her husband again with a little defiance in her attitude.

"Because I have been spared such an existence it seems to me now that I ought to deal gently with those of my sisters who have not been so fortunate as I. They are human just as I am human, and they should be treated humanely."

Bradshaw tried to pass the matter off lightly and shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly. He refused to take her words with any marked degree of seriousness.

But Smollet was genuinely shocked. His instinct was to rebuke the woman before him, but that he could not do, so he said merely: "Mrs. Bradshaw, I am surprised to hear you talk this way."

The woman glanced at him sharply. She was defending a cause which she believed in, and there was a little

The Upright Man

excitement in her voice. She arose and turned to the minister.

"You shouldn't be surprised, Dr. Smollet," she said resolutely, "for what I say is true. With men, perhaps, it is different, but when I look back over my youth I can see now that there were times when, if circumstances had not intervened, I would have made a false step—a step that might have led to just the sort of thing I have seen to-day."

Bradshaw was now on his feet. He smiled broadly at his wife's words, and going to her put his arm around her.

"Can you imagine such a thing, Smollet?" he asked laughingly.

The other man caught the tenor of Bradshaw's remark and smiled also, shaking his head.

"Really, Mrs. Bradshaw," he said in mock seriousness, "if you persist you will have your husband curious as to details."

As he spoke the bell rang.

"Hello! that's probably Gleason now," he remarked. "Are you going over with us, Bradshaw? . . . And you, Mrs. Bradshaw—will you be ready to go with us? We will gladly wait for you."

Outside in the hallway a boisterous, good-natured and confident voice was saying: "Never mind, my man. I know the combination."

At almost the same moment Jimmy Gleason, the evangelist, entered the room briskly, his soft felt hat in his hand. He was a large, athletic-looking man with loose-fitting clothes and a low collar. His hair gave signs of having been combed hurriedly. His features were rough and had about them a certain aggressive power. He

The Eternal Magdalene

came of a different class of society from that of either of the two other men in the room. He possessed none of the quietness and dignity which characterises the man of cultural training. He might have been a successful contractor, an overseer of workmen, or a foreman in a factory where heavy and difficult work was done.

"Hello, everybody!" he called swaggeringly, as he entered. "Howdy, Mrs. Bradshaw. . . . Ready, Smollet? We're 'way behind the schedule. Couldn't shake those newspaper guys off. They're a pest. Some day I'll clean them up too. But say! You should see the crowd fighting to get into the show to-night. It'll be the biggest camp-meeting yet. That raid last night got 'em all stirred up. To-night there'll be another big blow-off. We'll ring the curfew on our scarlet sisters before they have time to comb their hair."

Mrs. Bradshaw, with a pleasant nod, left the room quietly to put on her coat and hat.

When she had gone Smollet said to Gleason: "You should have been here five minutes ago and heard a report on the human side of these women."

"Heard 'em all my life," Gleason replied impatiently. "Platitudes never yet cleaned up a town. Bradshaw knows that. Didn't he try it for three weeks before I went to bat here?"

"By the way, Gleason," Bradshaw answered, "the *Star* wants a statement from me——"

"Give it to 'em, give it to 'em!" The evangelist laughed and waved his arms. "And put plenty of shrapnel and nitro-glycerine in it. Every little bit helps."

Mrs. Bradshaw re-entered the room.

"I'm ready, gentlemen," she announced.

"Where's Paul and Elizabeth?" Bradshaw asked.

The Upright Man

“They’ll leave for the Tabernacle in five minutes,” the mother said. “Elizabeth is going to wear a new dress to-night, and it’s taking her longer than usual to get it ready. I told Paul to wait for her. They’ll join us presently.”

“Well, then, we’re off, friends!” sang out Gleason jovially, putting on his hat.

The four walked out into the cold October night.

CHAPTER III

YOUNG LOVE AT SPRING

SCARCELY had they quit the house, when Bellamy came up hurriedly and rang the bell.

"Otto," he said to the man, "tell Miss Elizabeth I'm here."

Otto turned and went upstairs, a faint and sagacious smile on his face.

Bellamy walked into the living room and looked out of the window guardedly at the retreating figures. He had met Elizabeth Bradshaw four years before. She was then only a little girl in short dresses and with curls hanging down her back. Her prettiness had attracted him; and on many occasions, because of his intimacy with Paul, her brother, he had been thrown in contact with her. He had treated her like a big brother, had helped her sometimes with her school tasks, and had held her spell-bound with stories of adventure connected with his newspaper work. She had liked him genuinely from the first.

When she was older Bellamy would sometimes come to the boarding-school in the afternoons and walk home with her. For many reasons he never spoke of love to her. First, she was too young. Again, she had never given any indication that she considered him other than a jovial companion, and he was afraid of spoiling the friendship which, more and more as the months went by,

Young Love at Spring

became an integral and important part of his life. He hesitated also because of her position and that of her father.

Like most young newspaper men he was poor, even to the point of finding it difficult to live within his income. He had nothing to offer her but himself, and he was not at all sure that she desired him. And again, the fact that she was the daughter of a very wealthy man brought to the fore in him a sense of chivalry which made him hesitate in taking the initiative in so unequal an alliance. But a deeper reason than all these held him to the present course of his platonic relations with the girl—he did not know whether he himself truly loved her or not. She fascinated him, and her beauty appealed to him. Her sweetness and tenderness, too, affected him deeply. She was such a child; there was so little of the woman in her that he often wondered whether his infatuation was not, after all, superficial.

During the last year, however, all doubts as to the genuineness of his affection vanished. He could not banish the girl's features from his mind. She was constantly before him—in the office, when he walked the streets, even during his moments of diversion. He dreamed of her constantly. Often his mind would unconsciously go off on a train of thought, and he would catch himself dreaming of their future together, planning splendid and fantastic hours of pleasure with her as his sole companion.

He called as often as he dared at the Bradshaw home. Sometimes he was able to be with the girl alone, but it was only for brief intervals. There was always some one else nearby, and he was unable to tell her what was in his heart, even if he were sure that he wanted to. Al-

The Eternal Magdalene

ready a feeling of protection and loyalty had grown up in him. Although he did not admit it to himself, he knew that the day would come, as inevitably as death, when he would go to her and pour out all the pent-up emotions which she had aroused in him.

One day, on an excursion down the river in which a number of the young people participated, he was left alone with her. Together they had walked along the green and mossy shore until the others had been left behind. When they had come to an old white bridge below the city, where the water was deep and calm, they had stepped out on it and leaned over the railing, watching their reflections in the water. She had woven for him a wreath of wild flowers, and some of the petals had fallen into the water and floated silently away. As they stood watching, a silence had crept between them, and some subtle impulse had drawn him to her. He felt the warm touch of her body against his, and he had looked up at her face suddenly, as if she had been some wild creature who had just appeared to him out of the purple fastnesses of the cool wood.

The sunlight fell upon her hair, which was a mixture of gold and bronze. Her large leghorn hat hung about her shoulders, held by a black satin ribbon. A seriousness, which he had never noted before, had come into her expression. Though apparently she was looking down at the surface of the river, her eyes seemed to see things which were far beyond her range of vision. The air was still with the lassitude of mid-summer. A slight haze of heat hung about the tops of the surrounding hills. From the distance came the perpetual murmur of the city, and the inarticulate talk and laughter of the other members of the party. Overhead in the tall trees an

Young Love at Spring

occasional bird would start singing, but would suddenly become silent as if it were unable to combat the lethargy of the season.

Bellamy had taken the girl's hand in his, where she let it rest passively without so much as looking at him or making a movement to indicate that she had been aware of his action. At that moment he knew that his whole life had been but a prelude to the possession of the girl at his side. All that was best in him came to the surface. But although many words of endearment crowded to his lips, he was caught in the mesmerism of the silence about him and uttered no sound.

As they stood close to each other, held in the silent spell of young love, a squirrel leapt from a branch of a tree overhanging the bridge and ran along the railing toward them. The girl moved quickly and laughed joyously. Her hand was withdrawn. The mood was broken; and they began to chatter of impersonal things.

From that day forward, although no direct word of love had passed from one to the other, an unspoken understanding had grown up between them. They had always called each other by their first names—that is, Bellamy called her Bess, after the manner of the members of her family; and she had always called him what her brother called him—Jack. But even into this familiarity, which had heretofore carried with it no significance, a new meaning had entered. When Bellamy brought her flowers, or did little favours for her, there was an added intimacy and tenderness in his actions. And when she thanked him she would look at him with eyes into which had crept a new point of view.

Thus, with no word or action indicative of their passion, they had in their hearts drawn close and closer to

The Eternal Magdalene

each other. Bellamy was able to understand the psychological development of the situation, but the girl had not questioned the atmosphere which surrounded their relationship. The thought of love had not presented itself to her. Due to the strictness with which she was guarded by her father, the younger men of Edenburg had never been able to carry on a flirtation with her. She knew, however, that she liked Bellamy, that she felt happy and secure when he was near her, that when he touched her she experienced a new kind of thrill. At the private dances which the young people of the city gave, and which she was sometimes permitted to attend, she accepted without self-inquiry the fact that she preferred to dance with Bellamy.

She never analysed her emotions. She accepted them as a desirable addenda to her girlhood. Therefore, in her desire to see Bellamy as often as she could, she was franker than she would have been had she known of the great current of sex which ran beneath her desires. Often she would call up Bellamy by telephone on nights when her father was to be away, and ask him to call. The presence or absence of Elijah Bradshaw had become a joke with them, and without consciousness of disloyalty she frequently planned to see Bellamy at times when her father could not interfere. Such meetings were not in any sense clandestine, for they were always in her home. At bottom they were sufficiently innocent to lay at rest any qualms which Bellamy might have had, had it occurred to him that he was acting underhandedly.

For instance, to-night Elizabeth had asked Bellamy to call and go with her to the Tabernacle. She had told him to wait until her mother and father had left, so that

Young Love at Spring

she might walk over with him alone and be beside him during the meeting. She had purposely delayed her toilet lest she should be compelled to go with the others.

Bellamy had fallen in with her scheme without a sense of guilt. In his heart he was loyal to the girl. He would have fought as hard as her father before he would have let any harm come to her. Paul, too, knew of his sister's little deceits, but he liked Bellamy more than any young man he knew, and trusted him implicitly. The brother therefore often assisted good-naturedly with their plans. He sympathised with his sister's lack of freedom, often protesting to his father about it.

"Things have changed, father," he would say, "since you and mother were young. A girl ought to be allowed to go out and have friends and meet people and not be treated like a nun. Bess is the only girl in Edenburg who is kept in all the time and forbidden to do everything she wants to do."

And Elijah Bradshaw had answered: "Customs may have changed, but what is right never changes. It is proper for a man to have more or less freedom, but I won't have any daughter of mine running around, picking up false ideals and losing all her modesty. . . . Now go on about your business."

As Bellamy turned from the window, Elizabeth came running down the stairs.

"Hello, Jack," she called, giving him her hand. "I came pretty near not seeing you to-night. Mother insisted that I go with them. . . . Mr. Gleason himself was here."

"Don't *I* know?" Bellamy laughed back. "I waited ten minutes round the corner till I saw them come out. I thought maybe they were waiting for you and wouldn't

The Eternal Magdalene

leave without you. . . . I was awfully glad when I saw they had left you behind."

"Well, if it hadn't been for this new dress," the girl explained, "I'm afraid mother would have gotten angry and suspected something. . . . How do you like it?"

She turned gaily around two or three times, stopping now and then to pose like the models she had seen in the fashion shows.

"Beautiful!" commented Bellamy. "You *are* beautiful to-night . . . but you would be beautiful in anything."

"You mustn't talk that way," the girl admonished him. "Not even mother is in the house to-night. Paul is our only chaperon."

"Well, if that's the case, Bess," Bellamy replied, smiling, "I'll just *think* how beautiful you are—and always are, and how wonderful you are, too, and how sweet you are. You can't scold me if I don't *say* those things, can you? So, I'll just think them all to myself."

The girl pretended to pay no attention to his remarks or to take him seriously.

"I wish we didn't have to go to that old meeting to-night anyway. I'd love to sit here with you and have you read to me and tell me stories. But it's no use wishing. If I didn't go to the meeting father would be back after me in a minute to find out what was the matter. Then we would catch it!"

Bellamy looked seriously at the girl.

"Would you really like to sit here alone with me?" he asked tenderly.

"Of course, I would," she answered lightly. "I think you're lots more interesting than Jimmy Gleason."

"Is that the only reason?" The young man looked straight into her eyes.

Young Love at Spring

"Why, of course, silly!" She tried to hide her embarrassment, for something in the man's eyes made her feel uneasy. "Why otherwise should I want to be with you?"

Bellamy shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"Oh, well, I guess that's as good a reason as any. Anyway, the fact remains that you'd like to be with me, and that's consolation enough for a poor reporter. However, perhaps we can arrange to be together to-morrow."

The girl's face brightened.

"How, Jack?" she asked, not trying to hide her eagerness. "To-morrow's a holiday, and you know father'll be here all the time. It's no fun with him around; he's such a grouch."

"Well, just because it's a holiday is the reason that maybe we can be together. I'll tell you what the plan is. Arnold Macy—you've often heard me speak of him—has a new machine, a little touring car which looks almost like a real automobile; and he wants to initiate it by taking us out to the Country Club—you and Paul and me."

"Oh, wouldn't that be lovely!" the girl exclaimed. "I really think if Paul went with us mother would give her permission, and if she'd consent I don't think father would object. . . . But how does Mr. Macy know about me? I've never seen him in my life."

Bellamy smiled.

"You're all that I talk about to him—or to any one else, for that matter. He wants very much to meet you. He's an awfully nice chap—I've known him for years. He was the fellow I was going to college with once. He met Paul the other night and maybe that gave

The Eternal Magdalene

him the idea about asking us. . . . What do you say! Will you go?"

"*Will I!*" The girl clapped her hands together in anticipation. Then of a sudden her face darkened. "If only mother will let me. . . . I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll have Paul ask her."

She ran to the foot of the stairs.

"Paul! Paul!" she called. "You old slow-coach! Jack's down here waiting, and if you don't hurry father'll be back for us. . . . And anyway," she added, "I've got something *most* important to ask you; so hurry up."

"I'm coming, sis," answered a voice from upstairs. "Hang these old meetings, anyway! I wish I didn't have to go."

In a moment he was hurrying downstairs, pulling angrily at his cravat.

"If I didn't have to dress up I wouldn't care so much. . . . Hello, Jack!" he greeted Bellamy with a friendly hand-shake. "How do you like going to the big show every night?"

"Part of my job, old man," the reporter answered, in good humour. "At any rate, I get paid for going. . . . Now listen, Paul; I want you and Bess to convince your parents that it will be perfectly proper for you both to spend the day at the Country Club with Arnold Macy and me to-morrow. We can have a good time, and there'll be plenty of old snoops out there who will act as unofficial chaperons in case your mother has any objection."

"You can make mother let us go, can't you, Paul?" the girl put in pleadingly. "I never get out of this old house to see anybody or have any fun."

"Sure I will, sis," her brother assured her seriously.

Young Love at Spring

“And if mother refuses to let you go, I’ll threaten to leave home.”

“There, there!” laughed Bellamy. “Don’t take it so seriously. . . . But really I don’t see what harm there could be.”

“Well, it makes me sore the way they treat Bess.” Paul went into the hallway and got his hat. “But we’d better hurry now or father will lock us both up in our rooms for six months, and then we won’t go anywhere. . . . It makes me sore, I tell you!”

As they went out Bellamy took the girl’s hand and pressed it tenderly, and she returned the pressure, so that all that evening during Gleason’s sermon, he knew that the speaker was wrong—that Heaven, in fact, was on earth.

CHAPTER IV

THE BITTERNESS OF FATHER-LOVE

THE next morning Arnold Macy and Bellamy called at the Bradshaws'. Elizabeth had telephoned earlier that her mother had given permission for her and Paul to go on the proposed trip. During the night the Indian Summer had made its arrival. Warm, gentle breezes stirred along Edenburg's streets. The sky was almost cloudless, and the sunshine was mellow and pleasant. The autumn leaves were ablaze with red and yellow.

"What a wonderful day for a ride!" Elizabeth exclaimed happily as she settled herself in the rear seat with Bellamy, while Paul sat in front next to Macy.

"The day would make no difference," Bellamy told her tenderly, so that the others could not hear. "Any day would be wonderful with you."

The girl did not answer, but turned her head away. After Bellamy had left her the night before she had remembered his words, and they had affected her strangely. Now, for the first time, she felt self-conscious with him. When he spoke as he had just done it made her uncomfortable and ill at ease. Yet she would not have had it otherwise.

They were soon in the country beyond the straggling houses of the city's suburbs. The hills loomed before them like red banks of flame, and there was just enough

The Bitterness of Father-Love

crispness in the air to be invigorating. Withal the decay of the year made the girl a little sad; but it was a sadness which she liked, for it brought with it a feeling of tenderness toward Bellamy. Even now she did not know why she felt toward him as she did. He had uttered no word of love to her, and she was unconscious that the great emotion had entered her heart. There was, perhaps, too much familiarity in their relationship. She had known him too long; the growth of her love had been too gradual for her to realise it fully. It lacked the novelty of a sudden and tempestuous courtship. But her feelings made her content, and the freedom she felt in being away from her home and from under the supervision of her parents, added to this contentment. To-day she was at peace with the world.

For nearly two hours they drove about the hills, on the open roadways, over the crackling leaves, along yellow meadows, beside the deep green river, through lanes of overhanging trees. Elizabeth and Bellamy talked little. All words seemed inadequate to express the magic of her emotions. Sometimes when a beautiful vista of colour appeared before them, she would call his attention to it, and he would look at it with her and comment briefly. Once, when they were passing along a precipice over the river, she drew back a little in fright, so that her body was close against his. Bellamy's arm went about her protectingly, and she accepted his action as a natural thing, and did not object. When the precipice had been passed she drew gently away. During the trip she reached out from time to time and broke off little branches of crimson leaves. When she had reached the Club House her lap was filled with the last colourful glories of the passing year.

The Eternal Magdalene

"I am so happy to-day!" she breathed gently, as they turned into the long gravel roadway which led through the Club grounds.

Bellamy looked at her, seriously wondering to himself how far he might be responsible for her happiness. He loved the girl deeply, and that love had become a vital and accepted factor of his life. Not once had he let himself think that she did not care for him also, for the thought would have pained him too profoundly. As he looked at her it suddenly occurred to him that he had never spoken to her of his love, and he resolved that, before the day was over, he would tell her everything—all his hopes and dreams.

The machine drew up suddenly and Macy leaped out, apologising for his inexpertness as a driver.

"I'll warrant I have bumped you people frightfully!" His tone was pleasant, a little too pleasant; but there was in his manner that assurance which was one of his chief attractions with everybody he met.

He was a handsome man and dressed in good taste. He had about him a Continental air and a distinction which made him conspicuous even among the better class of young men in Edenburg. His eyes were grey and indifferent. His features were regular, and there was a cleft in his oval chin. His hair was very dark and always carefully combed. He wore a slender moustache which was always kept carefully waxed, giving him a nonchalant and somewhat rakish appearance. He was well-informed, quick at repartee, genial, and, at times, brilliant in his speech. He had a decidedly cosmopolitan bearing, was plausible and convincing, and adjusted himself nicely in any gathering in which he found himself.

At first Elizabeth Bradshaw had paid but little atten-

The Bitterness of Father-Love

tion to him, secure and content in her liking for Bellamy; but at luncheon, when Macy began to talk, she found herself giving him most of her interest. He easily dominated the conversation by talking of things with which the others were unfamiliar. He spoke of the cities of Europe and of his five years of travel, telling of the customs abroad, and painting glowing pictures of the little out-of-the-way places in Europe. He compared the Continental customs with those of America, and always there was in his remarks a little deprecation for the country of his birth. He was an interesting talker and seemed to know intuitively the things which would fire the girl's imagination.

For a long time he dwelt on the beauties and charm of Paris. He depicted the attractions of Saint-Germain in the springtime, the wonder of Sèvres and of St. Cloud. He told of the little boats that went down the Seine carrying picnickers to the quaint restaurants in the gardens below the city, of the crowded boulevards on fête nights, of the funny New Year's celebrations along the Avenue du Maine, of the multicoloured bazaars about the Madeleine, of the fountain in the Luxembourg mottled with the sailing boats of children, of the reckless and care-free student life of Montparnasse, of the frank joviality of the Bal Bullier, of the great lines of chestnut trees in the Petit Luxembourg, of the quaint old book-stalls along the quays. . . .

Elizabeth Bradshaw listened intently, fascinated by his recital of the wonders which she had never beheld. All the while she was comparing his descriptions of Paris with the scenes of Edenburg; and her heart beat a little faster and a flush of joyous excitement came into her cheeks as she looked forward with glad anticipation to

The Eternal Magdalene

that day—somewhere in the nebulous future—when she herself would see and be part of the life which Macy limned.

She asked him many questions of Europe, about Vienna and Berlin and London. He answered her readily and enthusiastically, aware that his words were thrilling her and that he had caught her in the mesh of his vivid descriptions. He painted pictures for her of the dance carnivals of Vienna, of the mask balls and the flower parades during "Faschingzeit," and of the many pleasures in the Kaisergarten during the summer evenings. He related how in the early mornings the German recruits in their new uniforms came out to parade over the dewy lawns in the Englishergarten and of breakfast under the trees. And when she asked him about Berlin, he told her of the extravagant beauties of the "Palais de Danse," of the parades along Unter den Linden, and of the wonderful drives among the trees and monuments in the Tiergarten.

And all the while the girl was becoming more and more enthralled. Her present life for the moment appeared to her cramped and unlovely. She had a sudden intense longing to get away from it all, to go to these cities of which she had heard, to forget that there ever was such a place as Edenburg—Edenburg with its paltry parks, its uninviting streets, its narrowness and gossiping, its deep concern with things which did not seem of matter, its lack of charm and its petty ways and habits.

During the luncheon Bellamy had said little. He himself had been interested in Macy's talk, but he had seen its effect upon the girl and he was not altogether pleased. He knew he was not Macy's equal in point of physical attractiveness, and he was conscious of the fact that he

The Bitterness of Father-Love

lacked the suavity of manner which characterised the other. And what he thought to be the narrowness of his own life, as compared with that of Macy's, had its effect upon him. He did not resent Macy's presence personally; he liked the man. But he felt that a dangerous element had temporarily entered into his relationship with the girl—an element which might influence her when he should tell her of his love.

He had made his resolve, however, and that afternoon as they walked along the shaded hedges around the Club House he had an opportunity. Paul and Macy had diverged from the path to reconnoitre among the burrs beneath an old chestnut tree. Bellamy put his hand on the girl's arm and drew her around so that she faced him.

"Bess," he began tenderly, but with determination, "I want you to marry me. I have never had the courage to tell you before to-day, but it seems as if I could wait no longer. . . . You *do* care for me, don't you?"

A perplexed look came into the girl's face, as if she had not altogether understood the import of his words.

"It will mean," the young man went on, "that we will always be together, that we won't have to wait to see each other, and plot and plan as we do now. . . . Maybe you have never thought of me in just the way I have of you, but I will make you happy, dear child. I'll take care of you and look after you. . . . Tell me, may I go to your father to-morrow and tell him that I love you?"

Something caught in the girl's throat. His words had inspired her with fear. And yet the realisation slowly came to her that she had always been waiting for him to say just the thing he had. Even now she did not look

The Eternal Magdalene

upon his request altogether with seriousness, nor did she stop to consider the tremendous importance which his words carried. She only knew that she would like to be with him always.

"If you really want me, Jack," she answered tenderly, and her eyes dropped before his, "you can have me."

Bellamy would have taken her in his arms had not the others joined them at that moment.

The afternoon was well along and Macy asked: "Shall we drive back now? We can take a long detour through the Arden Woods, and that will just get us home before dark."

The others agreed and they turned their steps back to the Club House.

"Won't you let Miss Bradshaw sit in front with me?" Macy asked pleasantly when they were about to enter the machine. "It's only fair, you know, Bellamy. You had her company all the way out."

Bellamy, secure and happy in his love and the girl's promise, agreed pleasantly. In another minute they were on their way home.

During the ride Macy asked Elizabeth if he might call that evening. She wanted to hear more of his stories about Europe and of the great pageant of splendid life in which she had never shared; so she told him he might come, and in her consent was no sense of disloyalty toward the man to whom she had plighted her troth. Her permission had been given simply and spontaneously.

Macy came early that night. Elijah Bradshaw and his wife had driven to Judge Bascomb's for dinner, and when Macy arrived they had not yet returned.

"It's good of you to let me come," Macy said easily, as he sat down near the girl. "Do you know, I really

The Bitterness of Father-Love

feel jealous of the fact that Bellamy has known you so much longer than I have."

His words and manner confused her, but she answered pleasantly: "I really feel as if I had known you ever so long. I have heard Jack speak of you so often. . . . And my brother likes you too. So you see, we are not exactly—strangers."

"I have known Bellamy a good many years," Macy returned. Then he looked at her in mock concern. "I hope his reports have been favourable."

"You know they have, or he wouldn't have introduced you to me to-day. He likes you very much."

"I am glad of that." Macy drew a little nearer to her and leaned forward. "Particularly if his opinion is likely to be endorsed by those to whom he gives it."

Elizabeth smiled reassuringly. "I have heard father speak of you too. You do some business with him, don't you?"

"I sell him bonds occasionally," the man told her. "That is," he added with a laugh, "I try to sell him bonds. . . . Tell me—what does he think of me?"

The girl smiled. "Oh, father approves of you, I think. If he didn't you can rest assured he would have said so, for father—well, you know what fathers are. . . . He's not as broad-minded as Paul."

"I know what you mean." Macy leaned back and put his hands in his pockets. "You mean that if he likes me he is very successful in concealing it."

The girl was obviously a little embarrassed. "Oh, hardly that, Mr. Macy."

After a brief silence the man looked at her seriously, and his tone changed as he asked: "And now that we are on the subject, what do *you* think?"

The Eternal Magdalene

The girl felt the instinct of evasion. "Of what?"

"Of me." Macy's voice was very low.

The girl knew that in some way she was being led onto dangerous ground, and intuitively she extricated herself by laughing and talking in a bantering tone.

"Surely you can't expect me to make up my mind in a minute about anything so very, very important," she replied.

The man refused to meet her mood.

"Why not?" he asked, almost indifferently. "First impressions are always the safest."

Elizabeth was piqued, but she did not know just why she should have felt so. After a moment she said in a matter-of-fact voice: "Do you want me to tell you, really?"

Macy simulated an air of martyrdom.

"Yes, tell me," he replied tragically, "my head is bowed to receive the blow."

"Don't be foolish," the girl told him, "because—I like you very much . . . that is, I think I do. . . . You see I have a lot of faith in Jack's judgment."

Macy arose quickly. "If you like me, then suppose you prove it by going with me to the theatre to-night?"

"I'd love to, but I couldn't dream of it," the girl answered at once. "With this great moral upheaval in town, the theatre is out of the question."

Macy turned and looked out of the window.

"Oh, yes, the moral upheaval—I had forgotten that. It's really too bad, and I'm awfully sorry. But this man Gleason is certainly a wonder. They say he cleaned up a cool fifty thousand in his last town." He turned and laughed lightly. "That goes far ahead of selling bonds."

"Shh!" warned the girl, holding up her finger. "You

The Bitterness of Father-Love

mustn't let father hear you say that. He is the Chairman of the Citizens' Committee. It was father who brought Mr. Gleason to town. He thinks the sun rises and sets in Jimmy Gleason."

"Well, I guess it does," Macy commented indifferently. "He certainly stirs them up in every town. . . . I'm really awfully sorry about the show. You see, I am leaving town at the end of the week."

Elizabeth did not understand why she should feel a pang of disappointment when Macy told her this. She knew instinctively that she must not let him discover the fact that she cared, and she forced herself to say lightly: "Can't even Mr. Gleason keep you here?"

Macy came very close to her and put his hand lightly on her shoulder. She wanted to draw away from him, but an expression in his eyes held her.

"If I stay," he said very slowly and earnestly, "it wouldn't be Gleason who would keep me."

The intimation in his words made her subtly happy, and yet she welcomed her brother's entrance into the room at that moment.

Macy turned, fully at his ease, and said pleasantly: "Bradshaw, I've just been trying to induce your sister to go with me to the theatre."

"Soft pedal on the show stuff, if you want to sell dad any more bonds," Paul warned him dryly.

"Well, anyway," said Elizabeth, "if we can't go we can at least have a little music here. . . . Paul, start the phonograph, like a good boy."

Her brother went to the machine which stood in the hallway, and, winding it, put on the first record which came to his hand. It was a lively modern dance number.

Macy held out his arms.

The Eternal Magdalene

"Shall we?" he asked.

The girl nodded her approval. Without a word they began dancing.

They had scarcely commenced when the front door opened and Mr. and Mrs. Bradshaw entered.

"Bessie!" exclaimed her father.

The girl, a little flushed, turned quickly. "Mother, this is Mr. Macy. . . . Father, you know Mr. Macy, I believe?"

Mrs. Bradshaw acknowledged the introduction pleasantly; but Elijah Bradshaw stiffened perceptibly and said merely, "How do you do, Mr. Macy," without offering his hand.

"I'm afraid I must be going," Macy said with a dignified smile.

When he had departed Bradshaw turned angrily to his daughter. "Turn off that everlasting machine."

She obeyed him, and then asked: "Why did you act that way to Mr. Macy, father? I think he is very nice, and you yourself have spoken of him to us."

"Because I do business with him, does that give him the right to call on you here?" Elijah Bradshaw asked irritably. "I will tell him to confine his affairs with this family to me at my office."

"Why are you so hard on Bess?" his wife asked him.

"It seems as if you go against me in everything, Martha." Bradshaw sat down at his desk. "Who is this Macy, anyway?" he continued. "He may be married for all I know."

Elizabeth went over to her father and put her arms round him tenderly. "Dad, you are cross to-night."

Bradshaw seemed not to be affected by his daughter's devotion.

The Bitterness of Father-Love

"None of that now," he said peremptorily, taking her arms from about his shoulders. "I know the world and you don't, my child. I've seen Macy's kind before, and I don't want him here again. . . . That's final."

The girl pouted. Crossing the room, she sat down by the table.

"That's always the way of it," she complained. "Here I am, shut up in this house day in and day out. Sometimes I think I'll go crazy with the loneliness of it. Other girls go out and have fun, but here I have to stay. I wish I could go away—to Europe, or somewhere. I might as well be in Sing Sing as to be here. I might better be there, for there are lots of interesting young men there."

Elijah Bradshaw glanced at his daughter but did not answer. He had had scenes like this before, and his experience had taught him to keep silent. So to-night he turned to his work, resolved to ignore the girl's complaints.

She, on her part, picked up a newspaper from the table and held it in front of her ostentatiously.

"Jimmy Gleason! Jimmy Gleason!" she went on fretfully. "Nothing in the papers but sermons. . . . How very exciting!" Her tone was mocking and sarcastic. "Sermon for to-night: 'Double-Crossing the Devil!'" Then she read aloud, imitating Gleason's manner: "'All there is in the Bible I am going to preach. I'll give you enough Hell before I am through.'"

Bradshaw struck his desk with his fist. "Elizabeth!"

"I am reading from this sermon," the girl replied sweetly.

"Well, don't read it in that spirit!" Bradshaw commanded sternly. He glanced at the clock. "It's nearly

The Eternal Magdalene

eight," he said. "You had better get ready. You will go to the Tabernacle with your mother to-night. Unfortunately, I have to stay here and work."

Elizabeth arose and left the room resignedly.

"Come on, mother," she said affectionately to the older woman. "Father is as cross as an old bear."

During the little scene between Elizabeth and her father, Paul had been standing at the window, frowning angrily. His sympathies were all with his sister. When she and the mother had gone upstairs he walked down to his father's desk.

"And how about me?" he asked, in a surly voice. "Have I got to go to the Tabernacle again to-night?"

Elijah Bradshaw leaned back in his chair and regarded the young man fixedly.

"Paul, what has come into you two children?" he asked in pained anger. "Haven't I done everything I knew how for you and Bess? I've worked all my life for you. I have built up a position for you. I think of your welfare first and foremost. But what thanks do I get for it? . . . You combat me and find fault constantly. You treat me as if I were your worst enemy." He brought his hand down on the arm of the chair. "But it's going to end here and now. I am going to run things the way I want to in my own home. I know what's best for you and I'm going to see that you act accordingly. Heaven knows you are treated leniently enough. Half the time I don't know where you are. Before Gleason came to town neither I nor your mother knew where you spent your evenings."

He leaned forward.

"Now, listen to me. You are going to the Tabernacle to-night, and you're going every night that Gleason's in

The Bitterness of Father-Love

town. No arguments will help you. Here I've devoted weeks of my time and given my money to pushing forward this work of reform, and what will people say when my own children don't take enough interest in it even to attend the meetings? Do you think I will permit you or Bessie to make a laughing stock of me?"

Paul scowled and folded his arms.

"I have been to these meetings often enough to save your reputation," he answered ironically. "I've been every night for four nights, and I think——"

Bradshaw arose and faced his son across the desk.

"No matter what you think, young man: you're going just the same. You know I can't go to-night. Already my work is piled up so that it'll take me weeks to catch up again, and if I can't go it would be a nice thing indeed if my family wasn't represented." He sat down again in his chair. "I suppose your mind is on that burlesque show that's playing here now. But I thank God for your sake that this city is in for a moral house-cleaning. Every father in Edenburg should be glad for his son's sake. In two weeks there won't be a remnant of the vice district left."

Paul looked past his father and sighed wearily. The older man scrutinised him for a moment.

"I hope, my boy," he said, in a severe tone, "that you have never been guilty of going down there."

The young man was about to protest, but Elijah Bradshaw held up his hand for silence.

"Don't answer me," he said. "Whether you went or not you'd say you didn't. . . . At any rate, I hope you have more respect for your mother and sister. No father is sure of his children. He hopes, but he isn't sure. . . .

The Eternal Magdalene

Here come your mother and sister now. Get your hat and go with them to the Tabernacle."

"Very well," the young man answered indifferently.

He joined the others at the door and went out with them.

Elijah Bradshaw was left alone. He worked for a moment, then rang for Otto.

"Put out the lights in the hall," he ordered. "I don't want to be disturbed. I'm not at home to any one—you understand? . . . You may go now."

He moved the desk lamp nearer him. It was the only light in his room. He drew in front of him the statement he was preparing for the newspapers. He wrote steadily for a few minutes. Then he put his pen aside and held what he had written nearer to the light. He was evidently pleased with it, for a look of satisfaction came into his face.

He began reading it aloud: "In spite of the silly sentimentality that prevails in certain quarters, these women who ply their unspeakable trade must be shown no pity. They have forfeited all right to human sympathy. One and all, they must be driven from the city—ruthlessly, remorselessly, as we would drive from our dooryards a pestilential criminal who sought to do us bodily harm. It is not pertinent to say that misfortune drove them to this, or poverty, or betrayed love, or a predisposition passed down from immoral parents. We have to deal with effects, not with causes. And I seriously mistrust if any of these alleged causes may be substantiated in fact. Our misfortunes are all of our own making. Poverty is a disease bred by laziness; "betrayed love" is a nickname for lust, and "predisposition" is a cowardly excuse for hiding our own crimes behind the tombstones

The Bitterness of Father-Love

of our ancestors. And so we call upon the officials of this city to do their full duty—not merely to close up these houses of infamy, but to see to it that their inmates, these women with the scarlet letters on their breasts, are banished forever from the community. . . .’”

CHAPTER V

THE WOMAN WHO DID NOT SMILE

ALTHOUGH there had been no sound in the house other than his voice, Elijah Bradshaw all at once became conscious of a presence in the room. He ceased reading and raised his eyes guardedly.

Before him stood the dim figure of a woman.

For a moment he was too astonished and too angry to speak. He had made it explicit that he was not to be disturbed, and here some one had found her way not only into his house but into his very study. He was startled too at the unusualness of the event; for even his closest friends were never ushered into his room without first being announced. There was something strange and irregular and sinister in the appearance of the silent woman facing him from out the darkness of the room.

She was a young woman, somewhere between twenty-five and thirty. Her face was calm and divinely peaceful. She had a wistful, almost sad expression in her eyes, suggestive of mysterious depths. World-old tragedy and compassion were written on her features, which resembled the portraits by which the old masters depicted the Magdalene. She had the appearance of belonging to another world and age. She was pale, and on her cheeks was a touch of rouge which harmonised illy with the softness and tenderness of her look. Her limpid, exotic eyes were set well apart; her nose was straight

The Woman Who Did Not Smile

and sensitive, her mouth exquisitely modelled. She stood erect, poised gracefully.

About her was a black mantle of many folds which reached the ground. Its hooded cloak had partly fallen back from her forehead, revealing a mass of dull bronze hair. Her hands were bare and hung passively at her side. They were graceful hands, white and conical, and they showed no signs of having laboured at even the ordinary tasks of life. There was a certain archaic mystery in her bearing, an almost esoteric aloofness, as though she had looked on at the sad struggle of life throughout all the centuries and had shared the world's sorrows. . . .

After Elijah Bradshaw's first wave of bewilderment had subsided, he summoned his speech and asked: "Who are you?"

The woman waited for the fraction of a minute. Then her lips parted slowly and she replied in an even, rich voice, at once dignified and humble: "A Woman."

Bradshaw now had himself in hand. He sat upright and frowned impatiently.

"Yes, yes, I can see that," he remarked hastily. "But who are you, and what are you doing here?"

The Woman's composure remained inviolate.

"My name?" There was a suggestion of a mirthless smile at the corners of her mouth. "What does that matter?"

Her complacency and coolness had now angered the man. When he spoke again it was with acerbity.

"You needn't tell me if you don't want to. In fact, I don't care to know it. . . . But how did you get in here?"

The grotesque singularity of the situation came to him all at once, and he made a move to ring for the servant.

The Eternal Magdalene

The Woman stepped toward him impulsively and put up her hand in a gesture of protestation.

"Please don't do that," she pleaded. "I'll go."

As she spoke she wavered slightly like one who has been overcome by weakness, and steadied herself on the edge of the desk.

"I thought—perhaps—you might help me," she added.

Bradshaw did not ring the bell. He checked himself, although he did not know exactly why, for he had fully intended to have Otto show the intruder out. He now looked at her curiously. His fears had been dissipated.

"What made you think I could help you?" he asked irascibly. "Why did you come to me? . . . How can I help you?"

The Woman raised her head wearily. "You can help me to get employment, perhaps."

At her words, the man sat back in his chair, smiling at his visitor's unusual manner in applying for work. He was irritated at the thought of her disturbing him in this manner, but realising she must be desperate to have broken into his house for such an object, he softened his tone a little, although even now when he spoke he was stern and businesslike.

"Well, perhaps I can give you something to do. But this is no time or place to apply for work. Go to my store to-morrow and if you can convince my Superintendent that you are willing and honest——"

The Woman emitted a hollow laugh.

"So that's your answer, is it?" She looked at him with ironical amusement. "I'm afraid I can't do that."

The other did not understand and answered her with an air of finality. "Very well. If you can't do that, that ends it."

The Woman Who Did Not Smile

But the Woman made no motion to go.

Bradshaw was profoundly puzzled. "Aren't you willing to work?"

"Oh, yes," she said wearily. "I am willing enough, but I could never work in your store. I must have a place not so public. You see, what you suggest would be out of the question."

Bradshaw arose angrily. "No, I don't see! What do you mean?"

"I mean that I am too well known. I would be recognised and that would make it hard for both of us. . . . Oh, it wouldn't do!" She looked around her. "Now a place here—in your home. . . ."

The man had decided that she was a crank. He had no intention of prolonging the interview. Already he had begun to feel uneasy.

"We are not taking unknown women into our home," he said, looking at her glaringly. "And it strikes me you have considerable presumption to ask for work and then dictate just what kind of work you are going to do. I want you to go now before I call and have you put out. I'm too busy to be bothered any more."

The Woman scrutinised him gravely, but even now she made no sign that she was ready to depart. The low, gentle quality of her voice had not changed its timbre when she explained, looking him straight in the eyes: "I came to you—because you were responsible."

For a moment Bradshaw was taken aback. He did not grasp her meaning, but her words had in them an unpleasant implication.

"Responsible?" he demanded, losing his temper. "Responsible for what? Tell me quickly and get out of here."

The Eternal Magdalene

But no display of anger on his part seemed to affect the Woman in the least. Again she replied gently: "Responsible for my being in the streets to-night, homeless."

It occurred to the man now that he was the victim of some mistake, that the woman was sincere but had erred as to his identity.

"I?" he said conciliatingly. "What have I to do with it? Who do you think I am? . . . My name is Elijah Bradshaw."

Again the Woman smiled slightly. "I know who you are. There has been no mistake. And it is you who have everything to do with it. Can it be that you don't know that hundreds of women like me are cursing you at this very moment?"

Bradshaw laughed in derision. Now he was sure that his conclusion about her being a crank was correct. But somehow her seriousness interested him.

"Cursing me? And, pray, for what?"

"I'll tell you." The Woman drew nearer to him. "For having thrown them out of their homes into the gutters. For having taken away from them their last shred of hope of getting out of the life they were living. For hounding them from cover to cover. For making them outcasts even more than they were. That is why hundreds of women are cursing you. Don't you suppose that they know it's your money that is paying for all this, that it is through your efforts these infamies are being perpetrated, that you—and you alone—are the one to blame?"

The cynical smile faded from Bradshaw's face. The whole matter appeared plain to him now.

"I see," he commented with contempt. "You mean

The Woman Who Did Not Smile

the women of the district. Well, my answer to your information is, let them curse. My conscience is clear. They have received only what they deserve. . . . But how does this matter concern you? You are surely not one of them?"

"How little you know of them! With what little authority you speak!" The Woman shook her head sadly.

Bradshaw was genuinely astonished. "Do you mean to imply that I am to believe that you—are a——"

"Oh, you needn't say it." The Woman's voice was tired. "But the fact remains that I am one of them."

The man looked at her incredulously. His interest in the situation made him forget his anger. He had forgotten even the unusualness of their meeting.

"You don't look like a vicious woman." He turned the light so that it might fall on her face.

As he looked at her his wonder grew.

"Why, your face reminds me of some one I once knew—a good woman she was. . . . And your eyes!"

After a moment's scrutiny of them he forced himself to laugh unbelievably.

"You are an impostor," he added.

He dropped back into his chair and his eyes were looking far away. The figure before him had brought back to life a memory which he had thought irretrievably dead.

Then slowly the woman drew back her cloak, and shook the hood from her head. She stood revealed in a gaudy red satin dress, trimmed with lace and gold braid. It was cut extremely low, and fitted her snugly, revealing the lines of her figure. She wore red satin slippers to match her gown. Her hair was combed loosely in an accentuated style, and was adorned by a large comb of imita-

The Eternal Magdalene

tion diamonds. With all of its gorgeousness, her attire was slovenly and shoddy, and attested, only too well, to her membership in the profession she had claimed.

"Now will you believe it?" she asked defiantly.

Bradshaw took one look at her, then leaped to his feet in rage.

"How dare you profane my home! How dare you come here and contaminate this very room where only a few minutes ago my wife and children were!" Before she could protest he had rung the bell violently.

The Woman did not heed the summons he had given.

"The children?" she repeated after him, quietly. "Perhaps a daughter?"

The man was white with fury.

"Daughter—yes, a virtuous girl, thank God!" he responded loudly.

"And a son, too, perhaps?"

"Yes, and a son!" the man flung back. "A boy who has never met such as you."

Once more a weary smile spread over the Woman's face. "These two—are they your only children?"

Bradshaw rang the bell again.

"Yes," he blurted. "How dare you question me?"

The Woman did not shrink from him. On the contrary, she approached to the edge of the desk and leaned over it, facing him and looking directly into his eyes.

"Are you sure—quite sure?"

The servant entered the room quietly. He was startled at seeing the Woman, but recovered his composure and stood waiting.

"Otto, how did this woman get in here?" Bradshaw demanded. "I told you I was to see no one to-night."

The servant approached, bewildered.

The Woman Who Did Not Smile

"I don't know, sir," he said in a frightened voice. "I heard no one come in, and the side and rear doors are locked, sir."

The Woman at the desk had taken no notice of the servant's entrance. She was now leaning closer to Bradshaw, and said evenly: "Look at me again before you order your man to put me out. . . . Are you sure these two are your only children?" She spoke so that the servant could not hear her.

Bradshaw, startled again by her voice, looked at her fixedly as the direct rays from the lamp fell full upon her features. For a moment he seemed as if hypnotised. Then a great fear arose in his heart. His lips trembled, and his hands clutched tightly on the edge of the desk. As the servant approached, Bradshaw waved to him mechanically to leave the room.

When he had gone the man laughed nervously, passing his hand across his eyes.

"No!" he said, "I will not believe it!"

But the Woman did not shift her gaze or make a move.

"Look at my face again." This time there was a command in her voice. "Look at it and then tell me that you do not remember the woman whose look you saw there."

Bradshaw looked again, fascinated. The muscles in his face began to twitch, and he shrank back as if stricken, covering his face with his hands.

"Ruth! My God! . . . But she has been dead for twenty years!"

"You do remember then, don't you? Will you dare deny it now?" There was a note of victory in her voice.

"She—your mother! I do dare to deny it!" Bradshaw rose again, his face tense with emotion. "You're trying to blackmail me! Some one had told you. . . ."

The Eternal Magdalene

The Woman shook her head. "I needed no one to tell me. . . . Do you recall when you met her?"

The man was taken off his guard. "In the autumn, at Blenheim," he said softly.

His mind had drifted back twenty years. An old page of the story of his youth had again been opened under his eyes. Every passage in that forgotten story now came to him, distinct and accusing. Again he saw a girl with a plain white dress standing in a woodland. There were autumn leaves all about her, touched by the gold of an autumn sunset; they seemed to be everywhere, in her hair and her dress, banked behind her, glorified by some unusual splendour. Again he held out his arms to her, and she stepped into them trustingly. She was interwoven with the saddening world, the drear skies, the browning meadows and the falling leaves. Bradshaw had been young then, and the infatuation of his first real passion was in his veins. He had taken her to Montreal, and for a week they had been happy. But the tide of his love had receded, and one night he had left her, without thought of the consequences of his act. He had never seen or heard from her since. But to-night the whole episode had come back to him vividly, raised from the grave of the past by the Woman who had come into his house.

"You do remember!" The Woman's voice brought him back. "Love comes quickly in hazy autumn days. . . . Were you fair to her?"

Bradshaw had been deeply shaken by the memory. When he spoke, in an effort to justify himself, his voice was uncertain.

"I had heard that she was dead."

"But they did not tell you that she had left a child?" the Woman asked.

The Woman Who Did Not Smile

The man tried to shake himself free from the hand of destiny which he felt tightening about his life.

"No—no; I never knew," he replied earnestly. "I will not believe it. It cannot be possible. . . . And yet—your eyes! . . . My God! I must believe it." He leaned toward the woman. "You are my daughter." There was a silence. "What am I to do. . . . And you, to what unspeakable depths have you fallen?"

The Woman looked at him compassionately.

"A little while ago," she began, "I heard you read that our misfortunes are of our own making. But that's not altogether true in my case, is it? You see, I had no chance—no mother's love—no one to point the way." She held out her arms to him appealingly. "But now——"

Bradshaw now remembered her saying that she had come to him for help; and in her appeal he read of her desire that he should acknowledge her as his daughter. The disgrace which would follow any such action was too great for him to consider. He drew away from her.

"No, no—never! Not that!" His voice was broken with fear, but he caught himself up sharply. "But I pity you—God knows I pity you, and my duty demands that I provide for you."

He reached in his breast-pocket and drew forth a purse. He looked in it and saw that it was full of bills.

"Here," he said, handing it to the Woman. "Now you must go away. When this money is gone, I will send you more."

The Woman drew herself up and looked at the man disdainfully.

"I want no money," she answered with scorn. "It is

The Eternal Magdalene

the cheapest thing in the world. What I want is a home, a father's love."

"But you can't have that here, my girl," Bradshaw replied, trying to hide his fright beneath severity. "That is impossible." He turned away from her and his manner changed. "I could not face it."

"You will have to face it," the Woman said calmly. "For I shall remain. It is my right."

Bradshaw was about to protest further, but when he looked into the Woman's eyes he saw that he was beaten.

"It's my punishment," he murmured. "God's vengeance!"

"But no one need ever know," the Woman went on tenderly, putting her hand on his arm. . . . "I shall remain here as a servant. And your son and daughter shall not be harmed. No one shall ever know who I am. You can explain it easily to your wife. You can say to your wife that I came to you highly recommended. Some one to whom you are indebted asked you to take me. . . . Don't you see how easy it will be for you to do your duty?"

The man protested again, weakly, like one who hopes against hope. "But my children—to think of you here with them—a—woman of the streets!"

"And yet," she answered gently, "by your own confession, your own daughter."

"God help me!" breathed Elijah Bradshaw, as he rang again for the servant.

"I have other clothes with me." The Woman indicated a small, shabby handbag which she had brought. "You need have no fear; these clothes I wear shall be put aside."

As Otto entered, Bradshaw forced himself to say in

The Woman Who Did Not Smile

a matter-of-fact voice: "Show Miss—this young woman to the spare room at the rear of the second floor, and see that she is made comfortable. She is to be a new maid. The others will all remain—and she is to be treated with every consideration."

Otto hid well his amazement as he left the room with the Woman and ascended the stairs.

When she had gone Bradshaw sat for many minutes as one dazed. Then, with a quick, impulsive movement, he opened a secret drawer of his desk and took out a package of old faded papers which were covered with dust. His hands trembled as he ran his fingers along them. Finally he drew forth a photograph and held it under the light. For thirty years he had not looked at the picture, yet he had always kept it, along with her letters. For some reason which he could not understand, he had never been able to bring himself to destroy these records of his early romance. They had always seemed to epitomise his youth, his first wild taste of love, the great awakening of his young manhood.

As he looked at the picture now, after all the intervening years, he said half aloud in a broken and defeated voice: "It is true. They were her eyes."

He bent his head forward in his arms.

"Ruth, Ruth, forgive me! I will make amends. . . .
Forgive me—I never knew."

CHAPTER VI

THE CURSE

ELIJAH BRADSHAW passed a troubled, restless night. Precipitously and without warning his life had been turned upside down. Although he was well along in years he had never before felt the ruthless and inevitable retribution of his acts. He had imagined himself secure from the hand of fate, and had come to look upon himself as his own destiny. His power had always given him a feeling of security. He had feared neither problems nor obstacles—the problems he could solve; the obstacles he could eliminate. Nothing had ever got the upper hand of him before. He had always met life honestly and in the open, shrinking from nothing, walking boldly into the face of danger, taking his chances with other men, serene in the knowledge of his strength and ability. Thus far in all his grapplings with the forces of existence he had been victorious. His conscience had been clear. He had looked life squarely in the face with an indomitable and austere bearing.

But now he had tasted the bitter acid of his own submerged weakness. The unknown and unrecognised canker which for thirty years had been eating away in the depths of his nature had suddenly and without foreshadowing symptoms undermined his prowess. His life's edifice, which he had carefully and painfully been building from his early manhood, had been based on a founda-

The Curse

tion wherein there had been a flaw; and the mighty structure now gave signs of falling about him, burying him and his family beneath it, and leaving him a wreck with nothing to show for his long years of labour and struggle. The safety of his future depended solely on the Woman who had come to him so mysteriously, bearing in her bosom the dread secret of the accumulated effects of his boyhood's misdeed.

Something in the Woman's words and attitude, however, gave him a sterner hope. She had in a measure made him feel that he could trust her—that so long as he did his duty by her, according to her own terms, she would not betray him. But the danger would always be present and imminent. His security and self-confidence had partially disappeared. He tried to convince himself of the injustice of it all, but when he thought of that girl whom he had betrayed in the long ago, he found little consolation in self-pity. He had done wrong. He knew that. He told himself it was a sin of his youth, committed when he had only inadequately understood the seriousness of his culpability. Were there not hundreds of men—men honoured and respected and living upright lives—who had been guilty of just such a misdemeanour somewhere back in their past? Were there indeed any men who had attained to his estate of worldliness and success that did not have hidden away some secret fully as reprehensible as his own? Was he so different from all other men?

In such questions as these he sought for consolation. In the quietude of early morning, he resolved to continue his life and work as if nothing had happened, and trust to the Woman's honour. It was the only course open to him. Something indeed might happen

The Eternal Magdalene

to extricate him from his predicament. In the meantime he would have to depend on the Woman's loyalty.

Before breakfast, he went to his wife's room and explained, as best he could, the presence of the Woman in the house. The fact that he had always done as he pleased in his home made easier his task. His wife had implicit faith in him. She never questioned his actions; and when he told her that it was a necessity that the Woman should remain, that she had been sent to him by some one whom he could not afford to antagonise by a refusal, she accepted his words with the same silent confidence which she had always manifested toward his decisions.

Elijah Bradshaw had at first shrunk from the deception of this explanation. He had never lied to his wife. But when he reasoned that her happiness, as well as the happiness of his children, depended upon his falsehood, he felt justified in his conduct. On first thought he had decided to go to his wife and tell her everything. He felt that she would have understood and forgiven him. But he knew it would break her heart and that the Woman's presence in the house would be a perpetual and ever-present tragedy from which she could never recover. He loved his wife and shrank from giving her pain. For that reason alone he did not do the brave and heroic thing.

At breakfast the Woman appeared in a plain black dress and black shoes. Her hair was combed simply and neatly and the rouge had disappeared from her cheeks. She wore a small white apron with white soft cuffs and collar. Her attire was that of the other maids in the Bradshaw household. Nowhere in her appearance was there the slightest indication of the life from which she had come. She took her orders from the but-

The Curse

ler and went willingly about her work, performing her duties silently and capably. Before the meal was over Elijah Bradshaw had been inspired with new confidence. Neither his wife nor his children suspected that anything was amiss, and it was evident from the Woman's actions that she had no intention of doing aught save what she had promised.

As he passed into his study, preparatory to going to his office, the bell rang and Bellamy was announced. The young man knew of the difficulty of obtaining a private interview with Bradshaw in his office, and his mission was such that he did not care to take any chances of being interrupted. He had come early in order to catch the older man before he had left.

"Hello, Mr. Bradshaw," Bellamy greeted him pleasantly; but when he saw the troubled look on the other's face he hesitated. Then he said: "The City Editor has sent me over for that statement."

Bradshaw, sitting at his desk, did not look up.

"I'm sorry, Bellamy, but it isn't ready. As a matter of fact, I don't think this is just the time to publish it. I am going to hold it up for a few days. I know you won't mind. Dr. Smollet and I decided it was best for the cause if it didn't appear until there were signs of weakening on the part of our enemies. I know you and your paper want to do what's best."

"Certainly," Bellamy agreed. He was not at all interested in the statement anyway. In fact, before he had come he had had no intention of speaking of it. "Let me have it when you think it will do the most good," he added casually.

Then he paused for a moment and regarded the older man critically.

The Eternal Magdalene

"By the way, Mr. Bradshaw," he began again hesitatingly, "do you mind if I speak to you about quite another matter . . . about Bess?"

"Bess? What about her?"

"The fact is, Mr. Bradshaw," the young man said earnestly, stepping closer, "I love your daughter. I have loved her for many years. . . . I want to marry her."

Bradshaw was astonished. He looked at Bellamy as if he could not have heard the words correctly. "You want to do *what?*"

The young man did not hesitate. He walked still closer to the desk.

"I said, Mr. Bradshaw, I want to marry her."

Bradshaw had recovered himself now and showed signs of anger. "So you have been making love to her behind my back!"

Bellamy only smiled.

"Not exactly, sir," he returned jokingly. "I tried to keep farther away from you than that."

Seeing that his efforts at intimidation had been unsuccessful, Bradshaw asked calmly: "Does Elizabeth know that you were going to speak to me?"

Bellamy nodded. "I told her yesterday I would take the first opportunity."

"Yesterday—eh?" Bradshaw frowned unpleasantly. "That's what comes of letting Elizabeth run about. I told her mother she shouldn't have gone." Then he changed his tone. "How much money do you make?"

"Fifty dollars a week." There was no shame in the young man's voice.

"Umph!" Bradshaw smiled in mild derision. "With that salary you couldn't keep my daughter in shoes. How do you expect to support her? . . . You have nerve com-

The Curse

ing to me and asking me for my daughter's hand when you haven't even enough money to take care of yourself."

Bellamy was not abashed.

"I heard that you were a poor man once yourself," he said. "I believe that you are even proud of it. Come to think of it, I have heard you say so. . . . Did you have such a sumptuous salary when you got married?"

"Times have changed," Bradshaw answered quickly, "and it makes no difference what I had when I married. My wife wasn't used to luxury—and that made a difference. But Elizabeth is used to it—but we won't argue the point."

Bellamy regarded him a moment. "Then your answer is no?"

"My answer is no," replied Bradshaw emphatically.

Still Bellamy hesitated.

"And there is no possibility of any change?" he persisted.

"None whatever." The older man's voice was irritable and determined.

Bellamy shrugged his shoulders a little hopelessly and started toward the door. In the hallway he hesitated again. Then he turned once more toward the other man, who had busied himself with his work and seemed already to have dismissed the whole matter from his mind.

"May I ask of you," Bellamy began, "if you have any objections to me—personally? You see, I want to get all my facts in hand before I go ahead."

Bradshaw was annoyed. Laying his pen aside, he asked with no little exasperation: "Why do you persist on this tack? . . . I have given my answer and I have given sufficient reasons for my answer. You certainly

The Eternal Magdalene

can expect no more. Personally, however, I have no objection to you—except,” he added qualifyingly, “I think you are too smart for one thing.” He thought a minute and then explained. “I’ve sized you up as one of those young fellows who think they know more than their fathers. I don’t know where they get it. Even Paul seems headed in that direction. He picked it up at college perhaps, but I can’t account for it in you and others like you. All the young men of to-day are chock-full of scepticism and pessimism. They are agnostics and unbelievers. They refuse to take anything in life seriously. They poke fun at the churches and scoff at sacred things generally.”

“Please, Mr. Bradshaw,” protested the young man, “don’t put me in that class. Where did you get the idea that I am of that sort?”

“From you yourself,” Bradshaw answered. “Remember, I have known you for a number of years, and I’ve heard you talk. Why, only the other night the way you opened up on Gleason was disgraceful. It struck me you had a lot of impertinence to talk to him the way you did. You were interviewing him for your paper, and you showed him no more respect than if he had been some kind of a labour agitator.”

Bellamy smiled faintly. “I did lose my head a little then, didn’t I? But the truth of the matter was he got my goat, telling how God calls him from one city to another. And we know—especially you ought to know—that he couldn’t hear God calling with a megaphone. If they didn’t show him the colour of the coin.”

Bradshaw struck the desk with his flat hand.

“You see!” he exclaimed. “That’s the sort of irreligious talk I mean. If I had never heard you make state-

The Curse

ments like that before, you have given me sufficient evidence right now, here in this room, to justify my attitude toward you." He shook his head, and said somewhat paternally, "You've got the wrong angle, my boy."

"And what about Gleason's angle?" Bellamy tried to hide his resentment toward the older man's accusations. "And what of his irreligiousness? . . . Listen here." He drew from his pocket a galley proof on which was much fine writing. "Here's an excerpt from his sermon tonight—advance copy sent around by his press agent. He's telling the story of David and Goliath." Bellamy drew up his sleeves and squared himself in imitation of Gleason's aggressive manner, and then began reading: "Oh, little Dave soaked old Goliath on the coco, between the lamps, and he went down to the mat for the count. Dave took his sword and cut the big fellow's block off, and the rest of the Philistine gang beat it.'"

Bradshaw could not restrain a smile.

"That's Gleason's style," he commented. "He means it the right way."

"Give him credit, boys!" Bellamy said sententiously, laughing. Then he turned to the older man and sat down. His tone was serious again. "I suppose, Mr. Bradshaw, you think my angle on the Tenderloin question is all wrong."

"I certainly do," answered Bradshaw. "I heard you talking to Gleason on that subject too, and I was shocked to think that a young man like you would defend anything so infamous."

Bellamy did not hide his resentment this time. "I wasn't defending it, sir. I was only citing some rather convincing crime statistics from other cities which eradicated their Tenderloin districts several years ago and are

The Eternal Magdalene

now balancing up their police court records." He turned quickly to Bradshaw. "But don't get the notion I am trying to be smart, for I'm not. It is my conviction that there are two sides to this question, just like every other question, and I told Gleason so. I know the one side is rotten enough. Any reporter who has ever done police court knows that. But if I were in the mayor's place and had it in my power to close 'em or let 'em run, and I wanted to be on the square with my own conscience——" He stopped and thought a moment. . . . "Well, I swear I don't know what I'd do."

"It's extremely fortunate for this community," Bradshaw commented ironically, "that you are not the mayor."

"Maybe," acquiesced Bellamy, with a whimsical smile. "Still, I don't know—I might get by. I had some good lessons at mayoring once."

Bradshaw snorted with contempt. "Lessons, huh? From whom?"

"From old Sam Jones in Toledo," replied the other, arising and facing Bradshaw. "I went there once on some political work and met Jones. You remember him—they called him Golden Rule Jones because he operated on the do-unto-others-as-you-would-be-done-by plan. His police court was a court of rehabilitation. He found the good that is in every man and built on it. And Toledo was what they call a wide-open town. There were a lot of reformers and shouters busy, of course. A committee just like yours called on Jones one day to ask him to close up the Tenderloin." Bellamy chuckled. "I was in the office at the time. Jones listened patiently to their argument. When they got through, he grinned pleasantly. 'All right, fellows,' he said. 'Let's shut her up. I don't want the Tenderloin here any more than

The Curse

you do.' The committee beamed on him. 'Now,' said Jones, 'there are only two ways to do it.' 'Well?' said the committee, congratulating themselves on the ease with which they had converted the Mayor. 'The first way,' explained Jones, 'is to chloroform all the inmates—that would be murder, and we can't do that, can we?' The committee shook their heads. 'And the only other way,' continued Jones, 'is to drive these women from our town into surrounding towns; and that would be like dumping our garbage over our back fence. It would be un-neighbourly and an unchristian-like proceeding, and I am sure that none of you fellows would think well of that.' The committee were nonplussed. 'So,' said Jones, arising, 'I guess we had better just let things be as they are.' "

Bradshaw sniffed contemptuously and went back to his work, indicating that he did not wish to hear any more.

But Bellamy ignored his action, and continued:

"The committee got as far as the door when Jones had an idea. 'Hold on, you fellows,' he said. 'There might be a way out of it after all. Now, just supposing we *good* citizens of Toledo take these women into our homes as guests or servants, and let our wives and daughters reform them. Now you can put Mrs. Jones down for two. How many will *your* wives take? "

Bellamy slapped his knee and laughed.

"Say," he went on, "the Chairman of that committee hit the ceiling like a skyrocket. 'Take these women into our homes!' he hollered. 'I've always heard that you were a fool, Jones, and now I know it first hand!' And the meeting busted up right there."

Bradshaw was secretly impressed. A new point of view had begun to creep in his calculations since the experience of the night before. But when he spoke he

The Eternal Magdalene

gave no indication of having capitulated even in the slightest degree.

"So," he remarked, "that's where you got your ideas—from a mountebank mayor?"

Bellamy arose.

"Some of them," he answered carelessly. "But," he added, like a man who had forgotten something and had it suddenly occur to him, "we're off on a tangent. Have you given any thought to the question I asked you a little while ago? . . . Have I any chance?"

"I told you you haven't," Bradshaw said angrily.

"Just the same," the other said, smiling, "I'll ask you again—and I'll keep on asking. Maybe you'll change your mind about that and other things. You may even change your mind on this social cleaning-up proposition; at any rate, I hope you will."

Bradshaw now saw a way to close the discussion.

"My dear young man," he said, "I think I am safe in promising that if I do change my mind on that question, I will on all others."

Bellamy caught up his words eagerly. "That's a bet! I will hold you to that promise."

He held out his hand and Bradshaw shook it reluctantly.

Five minutes after he had gone, Otto entered the room with a letter.

"This just came for you, sir," he said, handing it to Bradshaw. Then he left the room quietly.

The man looked at the envelope curiously. It was unlike the other letters he received. It was on cheap stationery, and the writing was round and unformed as if a child might have written it. It was blotted, too, and his name was misspelled. He opened it with a feeling

The Curse

of alarm, although he could not account for his emotion. There was nothing on the outside to indicate what was within. Yet he had a feeling that the contents held something unusual and unpleasant. As he glanced down the page he saw that the letter was unevenly written and poorly punctuated, as if its author had been struggling with an unfamiliar medium.

It ran: "Mister Bradshaw. Last night I was arrested and thrown into jail. This morning the madam came and paid my fine. I went back to my house on Bridge Street, everything I had, clothes, etc., was throwed out in the street. I didn't have any money and I haven't got any friends. There was nowhere for me to go. I went out in your park and met a man, he gave me five dollars. In the afternoon the coppers come to me and said you get out or you'll be put in jail. This is all your doing, you and Gleason are to blame. I wasn't troubling any one and I have a brother I am sending to school, and don't think I'll ever forget you or your friend Gleason. Look what you have done to me and my little brother. This is my home town like it is yours and I'm going to stay here as long as I want to in spite of you and the rotten police, and I'll curse you every minute of the time and this will be the curse which I will work on you—your own daughter will be ruined, your son will turn out a thief, and your wife will die and you will die also hated by everybody. Now that is my curse and it will come true. I know it will come true, my mother was a Spaniard, and she always taught me that a curse comes true."

The letter was signed "Mable Mordaunt."

The letter fell from Bradshaw's fingers. Ordinarily such a communication would not have affected him, but

The Eternal Magdalene

the crudeness and simplicity of this epistle planted an uncanny fear in his heart. He remembered the words of the Woman when she had told him that there were hundreds like her who were cursing him for what he had done. The tragedy of the night before had unstrung him, and this letter, coming, as it did, when he was shaken and unnerved, frightened him almost like sorcery. He was not a superstitious man, but the strangeness of the events during the past twelve hours had brought him face to face with those hidden mysteries of life at which heretofore he had been inclined to scoff.

As he sat looking at the letter his face was tense and pale. He thought of the Woman now in his home, and was overpowered by some unaccountable horror, as if the veil had been snatched from the serene surface of life and there had been revealed to him those cryptic currents which lay beyond the understanding of man.

Martha Bradshaw entered the room unnoticed.

"I thought you had gone to the office," she began. Then she saw the look on his face, and the terror in his eyes, and came toward him quickly.

"What is it, Elijah?" she asked, frightened. "What has happened?"

He drew himself together and smiled weakly.

"Nothing of any importance," he said, "only this letter gave me a shock for a moment. . . . I suppose I was foolish to give it a second thought."

Martha Bradshaw read it and said nothing for a long time. Her hand, too, trembled a little, and the colour went from her face.

"It's awful!" she breathed. "It frightens me. What a terrible curse!"

The sight of his wife's condition made the man forget

The Curse

for the moment his own feelings. He went to her and patted her on the shoulder.

"There, there," he said consolingly, laughing a little, "it means nothing. I suppose I ought to expect this sort of thing." He folded the letter and put it in his pocket. "You always did have a touch of superstition in you," he added. . . . "Now I must be off."

He rang for his hat and coat.

"Good-bye, dear," he said, trying to appear indifferent.

When he had gone, Mrs. Bradshaw sat very still for some minutes, gazing fixedly ahead of her.

The Woman entered noiselessly and came down the room to where the other sat. There was grief in her eyes as she looked at the seated figure. She paused behind Martha Bradshaw's chair as if she desired to offer comfort but did not know how to approach her.

"Are you troubled about anything?" she asked, after a moment's hesitation, in a voice fraught with compassion.

The seated woman turned and looked into her servant's eyes. Some deep understanding passed between them. All consciousness of caste fell from them. They were merely two women bound together by the common tie of some unspoken grief.

"My husband has received a girl's curse in the form of a letter," Martha Bradshaw answered simply.

"And it has made you suffer," the Woman answered. "It may be all for the best," she went on gently. "It may be part of some great plan to bring your husband, through the fire of suffering, to a truer understanding of the tragedies of others. . . . I am sorry for your sake. But it is always the woman's part to help bear the burdens for those they love."

"You believe that?" asked the other.

The Eternal Magdalene

"I know it," the Woman answered.

"I don't understand you—or why you are here," Martha Bradshaw said slowly. "But somehow I feel that you belong here—that we have always been waiting for your coming, and never knew it."

CHAPTER VII

THE STORM-CLOUD

JUDGE AMOS BASCOMB sat in his luxurious offices talking with his architect and builder. His handsome terraces on Livingston Avenue had just been completed, and already the tenants were moving in. Every suite of rooms had been taken months before the buildings were completed. Livingston Avenue was one of the handsomest residential streets in Edenburg, and although the property owners had at first objected to the Judge's scheme of erecting his terraces, they had given in when they had seen the houses' prospective beauty in the plans. The erection of these modern and expensive flats had been a fond desire of the Judge's ever since he had resigned from the Judiciary. He had always wished to build in Edenburg a group of the most beautiful apartment buildings which the city had ever owned.

To-day his favourite enterprise had been completed. When he spoke to his builder it was with unfeigned delight and satisfaction for what had been accomplished. Bradshaw, as a friend of Judge Bascomb's, had used his influence to make them a success, and the Judge had been grateful. When Bradshaw in his turn had called upon the Judge to lend his name to the vice crusade, the latter had readily acquiesced. He was far from being a devout man, but he did not let his personal prejudices and habits stand in the way of allying himself

The Eternal Magdalene

with so valuable a constituency as the citizens who were back of the reform movement. To be sure, the Judge attended Smollet's services, but even in this practice he was simply following out the indications of a commercial compass.

When he retired from membership in the Judiciary he was a much wealthier man than when he had entered it. No one seemed to know just where he had acquired his money. And although there was some hint of irregularities and briberies, no charges against the Judge had ever been substantiated. His social popularity had tended to discourage any unpleasant speculations on the part of those who knew him, and the subject of his wealth had become an accepted and commonplace fact to which attached no stricture. During the ten years of his retirement he had devoted himself to many business enterprises, had taken elaborate quarters in one of Edenburg's largest office buildings, and had become an important factor in Edenburg's commercial life.

He was now a man of about sixty-five, white-haired and smooth-shaven. He was robust and hearty, with a slight leaning toward corpulency, and was considered a jovial and pleasant companion. Though he had never married, he was fond of women impersonally and in the aggregate, and they on their part found him agreeable and attractive. He lived extravagantly, enjoyed the good things of life, and entertained lavishly. He was an intimate friend of Elijah Bradshaw and other prominent citizens of Edenburg, had always contributed generously to charity, and was much sought after as an after-dinner speaker, no matter what the occasion. In some way or other he had a hand in all the important movements of the city's social and economic life. But in his activities

The Storm-Cloud

he always had a shrewd and penetrating eye on his own welfare and the advantages to be gained by his popularity. He had lined himself up with the reformers for the same reason that pirates sometimes consider it expedient to wear masks when scuttling a ship.

The younger men of Edenburg looked upon him as a gay and worldly old gentleman worthy of emulation. And though there were extant many tales of unconventional escapades in which he played the part of host, his hearty and good-natured manner was such that his acts were always forgiven. He drank much, though he rarely showed the effects of this indulgence. Being unmarried, he was a victim of corrosive gossip. There were times when he had been on the brink of ostracism in certain of the more strait-laced quarters of the city, but it always happened that he managed to escape that fate and succeeded in reinstating himself to the good graces of those who had questioned the propriety of his private life.

His name appeared regularly in the public prints. When he walked down Edenburg's business streets he was accosted familiarly but with respect by most of the prominent men who met him; and in all the principal cafés and restaurants he was treated deferentially. He was generous in his expenditures and paid his bills promptly. For this reason much was forgiven him; many concessions were made him. He was active, too, in the sporting life of Edenburg, and seemed to have many secret wires which he could pull with its government when occasion demanded it.

"By the end of the week, Arthur," he said to his builder, checking off the floor plans of his terraces, "every suite will be occupied—and by the best class of people

The Eternal Magdalene

it is possible to get. Smollet has sent me a dozen. Good old Smollet! He should have been a business man, not a minister. And—what do you think, Arthur?—I offered to pay him an agent's commission on the side for using his influence among his parishioners, and he refused to take a cent! . . . No; after all," he laughed, "I guess Smollet wouldn't make a good business man. He's too damned conscientious."

He paused a moment and drew before him an estimate which his contractor had made for the garden work of the terraces' lawns.

"I have decided, Arthur, to let you go ahead with your ideas," he said abruptly. "The price is high, but I don't want any competition in other quarters. Put in those imported trees, and get to work on the job at once. I want the yards in ship-shape condition by the end of the week."

"You're doing the right thing, Judge," the other assured him. "You've got a gold-mine in those houses, and there's no excuse for economy."

"That's the way I figured it," the Judge replied. "Now get busy."

After a few minutes' scrutiny of the plans before him, he put on his silk hat and drove to Bradshaw's office.

"Bradshaw," he announced suavely, when he had been admitted, "I want to get a big story in the newspapers about my new terraces. I wouldn't trouble you, only I know that you stand pretty close with young Bellamy, and he seems to have things his own way on the *Star*. If he'd write the story for me it would suit me down to the ground. . . . Do you feel like asking him?"

Elijah Bradshaw smiled craftily. "The easiest thing

The Storm-Cloud

in the world, Judge. And what's more, I can promise you that Bellamy will do it. Only this morning he asked to marry my daughter Elizabeth. . . . Come to my house this evening, and I'll have Bellamy there."

The Judge thanked him and departed.

All that morning Bradshaw had tried to work, but the events of the night before, coupled with the letter he had received that morning, so occupied his thoughts that it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could keep his mind on his tasks. Several times he had taken the letter from his pocket and reread it. It had cast a spell over him, and though he strove to throw it off, he could not react from its influence.

As he was about to go to luncheon one of his forewomen asked to see him. She held in her hand a newspaper.

"Mr. Bradshaw," she asked, placing the paper on his desk, "what do you want me to do about this?"

The item to which she pointed told of a Mrs. Young on Orchard Street who was suing her husband for divorce. It was a spectacular case which the papers were playing up because of certain racy details in the woman's petition.

"You know," the forewoman explained, "Mrs. Young is the girl who works in the jewelry department. Her prettiness has already attracted enough of attention—and I know how you feel about these things. Her husband is one of the shipping clerks here, and it looks as though the store might be in for a little scandal."

Elijah Bradshaw had always been strict when it came to the private actions of his employés. Before he would give a girl or a man a position his first demand on them

The Eternal Magdalene

was a recommendation of character. It was in line with all his theories and beliefs, and the papers had often commended him for his attitude.

When he had finished reading the story, which was accompanied by a large cut of the girl, he answered harshly: "Of course, we can't stand for this. We must get rid of both of them at once. . . . You should have attended to it without coming to me."

The woman hesitated.

"The fact is, Mr. Bradshaw," she said, "I did go to the girl and tell her she would have to go, but she cried and said she had no money and no other way to support herself—especially now that she had left her husband. She told a pitiful story of his abuse; and inasmuch as there seemed to be extenuating circumstances I thought it best to consult you. . . ."

"I see," Bradshaw replied imperturbably. "But, after all, it's no fault of ours. The good name of the store comes first. This is not a philanthropic institution. The girl will have to look out for herself. Let her check in at once."

He waved his hand in dismissal, and the woman left the room.

The next moment the incident was forgotten, so far as Bradshaw was concerned.

That afternoon he went home early. His head had ached and he had been unfit for work. He had telephoned to Bellamy and asked him to call that evening. In his study he met the Woman arranging flowers on his desk.

"Well, how do you find it?" he asked her.

"I like it here," the Woman answered serenely. "But I could see this morning that you were worried. Per-

The Storm-Cloud

haps you weren't sure of me keeping your secret. I don't want you ever to give that a thought. I shall never break my word. I like your wife and your children. I shall do nothing to give them pain."

Bradshaw regarded her closely. "I am glad of that. Do you think you will be content here under the circumstances?"

"Quite content," the Woman answered. "You see, I have a mission here."

Bradshaw did not understand. "A mission?"

The Woman smiled enigmatically.

"I want you to see things in their true light," she said. Then she looked at him fixedly. "Have you done anything to-day which might hurt your conscience?"

For the first time since the forewoman had left his office to carry out his instructions, Bradshaw thought of the girl he had discharged. Why that should have come to his mind at this moment he did not know. Yet the Woman's gaze on him, together with the memory of his act, made him feel a slight tinge of guilt. Could she in any way have found out? The question flashed through his mind, but went as quickly as it came. He dismissed it as an absurdity. Then he smiled.

"No," he said.

"Are you sure?" the Woman asked him.

"Of course, I am sure," he replied quickly, resentful because of her question. "Now leave me. I want to rest a while before dinner."

The Woman turned without a word, a look of hopeless sorrow on her face, and walked silently out of the room.

Bradshaw watched her until she had disappeared. Then with a shrug he dismissed any suspicion which

The Eternal Magdalene

might have been in his mind, and sat down in an easy chair.

An hour later, when he went into dinner, he noticed that his son's chair was vacant.

"Where's Paul?" he demanded.

Martha Bradshaw looked at him sadly. "I don't know, Elijah, Paul seems to be drifting away from us. Lately, when I have asked him where he has been, he has been irritable and evasive. Sometimes, I think we are too strict with him. I think he'd stay home more if the atmosphere were different. He's twenty-four now and resents being treated like a child."

"Resents my treatment of him?" Bradshaw flared up angrily. "He's a young ingrate! Only last night he tried to argue with me that he shouldn't go to the Gleason meeting. . . . I'll give him something to resent when I get hold of him. This is downright disobedience. I told him to come home to dinner and to go with you and Elizabeth to the Tabernacle to-night, and here it is seven o'clock and he hasn't turned up yet. He gets out of the bank at five o'clock, and there's no excuse for his not being here now. . . . But he'll show up for the meeting," Bradshaw added. "Sometimes I wonder if there isn't a woman at the bottom of his recalcitrance. If there is——"

He clenched his fist and snapped his teeth together. He would have said something more, but he felt the sombre eyes of the Woman on him. He looked up and met her gaze for the fraction of a second. There was a reprimand in her eyes, as if she had suddenly become an intermediary between him and his son—a protector of the young man.

Martha Bradshaw shook her head a trifle hopelessly.

The Storm-Cloud

"You're too hard on Paul," she said; "he's not a bad boy."

"Of course he's not," put in Elizabeth, "but Paul likes to have fun. Why shouldn't he? You don't know, dad, what it means to be shut up here all the time and made to do this and that."

"That will do!" Bradshaw brought the discussion to an end. Throughout the rest of the meal no further reference was made to the subject.

During the coffee, the door bell rang. Bradshaw turned to the Woman.

"Answer that," he said. "It is probably Judge Bascomb. I am expecting him and Bellamy to-night. Tell him to wait for me in the study."

The Woman went as she was bid. Judge Bascomb and the Reverend Smollet were outside. She held the door open and led them into the study.

"Mr. Bradshaw has not quite finished his dinner," she said, taking their hats. "He asks that you be so kind as to wait for him."

The Judge regarded her critically, letting his twinkling eyes run up and down her. He chuckled a little as he sat down.

"Thank you very much," he said courteously, almost sweetly. As she left the room his eyes followed her.

"Rather attractive young person, Smollet," he commented with a grin.

"Quite," returned Smollet stiffly. Then he added: "I never saw her before. She's a new addition to the household."

The old Judge was rubbing his hands together, still looking down the hall after the retreating Woman.

"Something of a beauty, too, I should say, Smollet.

The Eternal Magdalene

... Are you anything—of a—connoisseur in these matters?"

Smollet, pleased at the Judge's assumption of his worldliness, replied: "Hardly; I leave that to your judicial discretion."

Bascomb laughed. "I am afraid I am prejudicial where pretty women are concerned. As for discretion—well, that comes with years, and you know I am still in my early twenties." He arose and walked up and down jauntily, in the imitation of youth.

Smollet laughed at his antics.

"Oh, yes, Judge," he agreed smoothly. "You get younger every day."

The Judge turned, his face bright with having received this compliment. "But I hope the time will never come when I can't admire a pretty face—or—figure."

The Reverend Smollet was a little shocked, but he nevertheless said "Amen" with forced facetiousness.

The Judge's manner became serious. He knitted his brow as if trying to remember something.

"This girl looks familiar. I've seen her somewhere, I think." He was confused by the startled look on Smollet's face. "Some other home," he supplied hastily. "She's simply a housemaid, isn't she?" His tone became penetrating once more. "It shows how much confidence Mrs. Bradshaw has in her husband, having such pretty girls about."

"Bradshaw never gives her cause to worry on that score," Smollet assured the Judge with seriousness. He felt that his friend should be defended from any suggestion of calumny.

"Oh, of course not, Smollet," the Judge replied. "That was only a little joke of mine." He looked around the

The Storm-Cloud

room. "Bradshaw has a very pleasant time here. . . . Well, he deserves it. He's what I call a self-made man, if there ever was one. Full of real American stuff. Has the courage of his convictions, too—and that's what a lot of us lack."

To all of that Smollet agreed enthusiastically. "Genuinely successful, I call him. He has plenty of money which he earned himself—honestly. He has a remarkable family, too—a wife any man would be proud of, a sweet and beautiful daughter, and a promising son."

The Judge sat down. "Yes, he seems to have achieved happiness—if there is any such commodity in the world. He is certainly to be envied."

"And furthermore," added Smollet, "what is of more importance of all—he is a God-fearing, charitable citizen."

The Judge drew up his mouth queerly and said: "Let us hope that God will not play the trick on him he did on our old friend Job."

"'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,'" quoted the other.

At this moment Bellamy rang and was admitted.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said pleasantly. He looked at the Judge in quizzical good humour. "Ah, I smell a plot. . . . Well, whatever it is, Judge, you'll find me a willing and ready victim."

"I must say, Mr. Bellamy," the minister hastened to put in, seeing his friend's abashment, "that you have acted splendidly during our campaign. You have helped us a great deal."

"Tut, tut!" the reporter replied. "That's part of my business. If you were in favour of segregation, I would help you just as much—perhaps a little more."

The Eternal Magdalene

"What!" exclaimed Smollet. "Do you mean to tell me you are not in sympathy with us?"

Bellamy thought a moment. "Has it ever occurred to you, gentlemen, that there are two sides to the Tenderloin question?" he asked.

"To be sure," the Judge agreed readily. "The right side and the wrong side."

"Just that!" replied Bellamy, smiling. "There are lots of people of intelligence, doctors among them, and certainly many mothers, who believe that the whole crusade is a big mistake."

"But you are certainly not one of them, Mr. Bellamy," protested the Reverend Smollet with assurance.

"Why, I'm not so sure of that." The young man drew up a chair and sat down. "In my business I get a pretty good slant of both sides. You know, don't you, that these women are not leaving town; they are simply scattering. Lots of people are hollering to the police already because their neighbourhoods are being invaded."

The Judge laughed heartily. "Let 'em holler! Eh, Smollet?"

The minister pursed his lips.

"Well," he drew out slowly, "I hope what Mr. Bellamy says isn't altogether true. In fact, I am inclined to doubt it. The Chief of Police assured me that most of the women would be forced out of town."

"That's probably what the Chief hopes, but I bet he knows better," Bellamy replied.

Bradshaw entered the room.

"Ah, good evening, gentlemen," he said, without enthusiasm. "Smollet, I'm glad to see you."

"I met Smollet on his way to the Tabernacle, and brought him along. In a case of this kind it is good

The Storm-Cloud

perhaps to have moral support." The Judge looked at Bellamy jocularly.

"Perhaps," Bradshaw commented. "By the way, Bellamy, the reason I asked you to come here to-night is because I wanted you to do a little favour for the Judge—and me. You see, the Judge's new terraces on Livingston Avenue have been finished to-day. They are very beautiful flats—the finest in Edenburg—and I want to make sure that they are given the proper display in the papers. I knew you would be glad to see to this in the *Star*."

"Certainly, Mr. Bradshaw," Bellamy answered lightly. "We strive to please. Now, Judge, give me a picture of your elevations—oh, don't tell me you haven't them with you: I know you have!—and I'll write a story about them that will make the descriptions of Gautier read like a first reader."

The Judge handed the young man a roll of pictures.

"Very good of you, Bellamy," he said, offering his hand.

"Don't mention it, Judge," the other replied humorously. Then he smiled broadly and significantly. "There's not any of your other property you'd perhaps like to have written up, is there?"

Bascomb's manner suddenly changed, and he frowned.

"No, thank you—certainly not," he replied curtly.

"Well, now that my usefulness is over, I'll be off," Bellamy announced, bowing adieu to the three men. Then he paused, looking first at the Judge and then to the Reverend Smollet. "I'm sorry we can't prolong that argument on the Tenderloin. I've got facts up my sleeve that would amaze you."

The Eternal Magdalene

"You newspaper men are a menace to the community," the Judge declared banteringly.

"Except when you run for office, or want your enterprises written up—eh, Judge?" he asked in good humour. Then he turned to the minister. "Or when Good Samaritans like Dr. Smollet need publicity for their New Year's Eve grill-room crusades—eh, Reverend? . . . Good night."

In the hallway he met Elizabeth.

"What was father's answer, Jack?" she asked him.

"His answer was 'No'; but I'm not through with him yet."

"I'm afraid he'll never change his mind." The girl looked at him wistfully. "I have never known him to."

"Well, we'll see," said the young man, and he stole a kiss from her as he went out.

"He's a precocious young fellow," Smollet remarked in an attempt to recover his composure.

"Precocious?" The Judge's tone was a little angry. "He's positively pestiferous. He's actually been telling us, Bradshaw, that we've made a mistake in this whole campaign, Gleason and all."

Bradshaw did not reply at once. He bowed his head as if in thought. "We have made no mistake, gentlemen——"

The Woman came into the room quietly and drew the heavy curtains at the window. She crossed to the fireplace and put on another piece of wood. Then she went out without having looked at any one.

Bradshaw had watched her. "That is," he corrected himself, "I hope we have made no mistakes. But something has happened that makes me wish I had not taken

The Storm-Cloud

such a prominent part in it. . . . I had a great sorrow come to me last night."

The Reverend Smollet arose and crossed the room to where Bradshaw sat.

"Why, my dear friend," he said consolingly. "I never dreamed that anything had happened."

The Judge also arose. "I am sorry to hear you say this. . . . Smollet, I think we had better be going. It is almost time for the meeting, anyway. Will you join us later, Bradshaw?"

The man addressed looked up.

"I shall try to. But before you go I want to show you a letter I received last night."

He took Mabel Mordaunt's communication from his pocket and handed it to Smollet.

The minister had just begun to read it when he was interrupted by the hearty voice of Gleason, who had admitted himself by the front door without ringing and stood at the entrance of the study.

"Hello, every one!" he called. "I dropped in to make sure Bradshaw wouldn't slip one over on me again to-night. . . . You should have been there last night, friend," he added, coming down the room. "Two hundred and eighty hit the trail. . . . Say!" He waved his arms. "In another week we will ring the curfew on our scarlet sisters."

"I was just showing Smollet a letter I got this morning," Bradshaw replied quietly.

"Oh, a squawk, eh?" Gleason laughed boisterously. "Don't let that worry you. You ought to see some of my mail. Say, I get junk every day that would tie a can to anything you ever saw." He turned to Smollet. "Let's see it, friend. I'll bet it's a riot."

The Eternal Magdalene

Gleason took the letter and began reading it aloud. At first his tone had been derisive, but as he read on down the page his face grew more solemn, and his voice became low and monotonous.

When he began the Woman had appeared in the hallway, unseen by those in the room. She stood there until the man had finished, a troubled look on her face.

Gleason studied the letter a few moments before he said anything.

"This is a stiff one," he had to admit. Then he threw his head back and laughed, assuming his usual hearty and cocksure manner. "Oh, well, what's the dif? . . . Anyhow, you'd better cross your fingers, Bradshaw." He went to the man to whom he had spoken. "Here, put this in your vanity box, and forget it."

He turned and started for the door.

"Come on, Smollet, it's getting late. When I passed the Tabernacle the customers were coming in bunches. Keep your eye peeled for the fireworks to-night. . . . Are you coming, Bradshaw?"

"In a little while; in a little while," the other replied, preoccupied, again held under the spell of the letter. He did not move or look up as the other three men left him.

The Woman came slowly down the room to where he sat.

"I'm very sorry about that letter," she said compassionately. "I was standing in the hall, and I heard Mr. Gleason read it. You shouldn't let it trouble you. If these things are to happen to you, they will happen. If not, no curse can bring them about."

Bradshaw looked up at her sharply. For the first time he associated the letter in some way with the pres-

The Storm-Cloud

ence of the Woman in the house. Perhaps, this too was a part of her scheme, he thought. It might have been she who had instigated it. She might even have written the letter. She at least had it in her power to fulfil some of its threats. His expression of worry changed to one of hatred.

"You know something about this letter," he accused her. "Tell me what it means."

The Woman studied him pityingly.

"I know nothing of the letter," she replied calmly. "I once saw the girl who wrote it—that is all. Haven't I told you that I am not here to harm you, but to help you?"

Something in her voice reassured the man. "I am a fool to give the letter a second thought. Only, I worry so about my children. My daughter is irreligious, and my son disobeys me. I told him to be here to dinner to-night, and here it is time to go to the Tabernacle, and he has not appeared yet. And since you came I have felt all the time as if I were on the point of being exposed and disgraced."

The Woman touched him gently on his arm.

"If you are disgraced it will not be because of me. And as for your children, they are unhappy and restless because of your demands on them. You show them too little tenderness and human kindness. Have you ever thought of that?"

Bradshaw arose and brushed the Woman aside.

"What business have you criticising me? Why should you preach to me in this manner? All I want from you is silence—and you have given me your word to keep it. For the rest, I can take care of myself and my own."

The Eternal Magdalene

He put on his hat and went out.

The Woman drew back the curtains of the window and watched him until he had disappeared in the shadows. When she turned again into the room there was a sadness and disappointment in her look, as one who had hoped greatly for something and had been defeated.

CHAPTER VIII

A PRIESTESS OF APHRODITE IN A LIMOUSINE

IT was after midnight when Paul walked cautiously up the front roadway to his home. He looked up at the windows anxiously. There was no light and he gave a sigh of relief. He stepped on tiptoe across the front porch, but hesitated before ringing the bell. He was afraid the sound of his entrance would arouse his father; and to-night he did not feel like having a scene. If he could go in unnoticed, he planned to leave for his office early the next morning, so that he might avoid altogether coming face to face with the older man. As he paused undecidedly before the door he was paler than usual, and his hands worked nervously. He was obviously under some strain, and he had the appearance of one who had gone through an unpleasant ordeal.

As he approached nearer the door, endeavouring to make no sound, he was astonished to find that some one from the inside was opening it noiselessly. In the faint cool moonlight of October he could discern dimly the Woman standing with her hand on the knob, holding the door so that he might enter.

"Be careful," she warned him in a whisper, as he stepped into the room. "Your father was restless to-night, and he may be awake. If he hears you he will come down."

"How does it come that you were here to let me in?"

The Eternal Magdalene

the young man asked, dumfounded at so unusual an occurrence.

"I knew you were out," she whispered. "I sat up waiting for you. Now you had better go to your room and try to get a good rest."

She closed the door and locked it softly. Then she stood aside while the man walked up the stairs, wondering.

The next morning his mother came to his room.

"When did you come in, son?" she asked him tenderly. "I didn't hear you last night."

He told her how he had been admitted and repeated what the Woman had said to him.

"There is something strange about it," Martha Bradshaw said, as if to herself. "I do not altogether understand her. She is an unusual woman. But somehow I feel safer and more peaceful when she is around."

There came a knock on the door. The Woman herself entered.

"I hear your father rising," she said, addressing herself to the young man. "He will be downstairs in half an hour. I thought, perhaps, you would want to know."

She turned and went out, closing the door behind her softly.

"Say, she's a wonder!" commented Paul to his mother. "How did she know I wanted to get out before dad came down?"

He finished his dressing hurriedly.

"I'll try to be home for dinner to-night," he said, kissing his mother.

He went below and hurried out of the house.

Martha Bradshaw sat a while in her son's room. Then she rang for the Woman.

In a Limousine

"I don't feel that you are a servant," she said, hesitatingly, when the Woman had entered. "I wish you would tell me something about yourself."

The other smiled quietly.

"There is nothing I can tell you," she said. "I am a servant in the house, and because I love your children and want to help them you mustn't think that I am anything else."

Mrs. Bradshaw was not entirely satisfied with her answer, but she felt that, even had the Woman something more to tell her, it would not be told. There was about her something unfathomable—something provocative of speculation.

"That was all I wanted," she told the Woman with undisguised embarrassment.

After breakfast, as she was putting on her hat and coat preparatory to going out, the Woman came into the room again.

"You are going—down there—again to-day?" she asked her.

For some unaccountable reason Martha Bradshaw did not resent this curiosity on the other's part, although she realised that had any of the other servants made a similar enquiry she would have reprimanded them. Now, she merely nodded her head.

"I am glad you are going," the Woman said. "Don't judge them quickly. They suffer enough, God knows, even if they are unmolested."

Mrs. Bradshaw scrutinised the Woman closely, but saw only serenity and tenderness in the other's gaze.

"I want to help them," she said, a trifle impressed. She had never before spoken of these matters with her servants. "I want to do what I can for them." Then

The Eternal Magdalene

some impulse made her add: "I sometimes feel that my husband is too severe in his judgments of them."

"I am glad you feel that way," the Woman remarked, as she opened the door. "I wish he, too, might feel the same."

All that day the Woman's words remained in Martha Bradshaw's mind. The incident, simple and genuine as it was, had been too singular to be forgotten. It left her with a feeling which she could not analyse. Now, even more than was her wont, she was charitable and forgiving to those whom she interviewed. Her desire to help all who needed her was stronger than it had been formerly. But, because of this reanimated desire, her task seemed more hopeless than ever. On every hand she heard stories of the misery being wrought by the crusade of which her husband was the instigator. At many places, when it was learned who she was, the door was shut on her. But these acts did not anger her. They only made her suffer the more.

Late in the afternoon she found herself in a little apartment near Bridge Street. In one of the houses which she had previously visited, the woman in charge told her of a young girl who, for a year, had been a consumptive. So quickly had the disease taken hold of her constitution that she was unfit to be around. The woman had been on the point of sending her to a public sanatorium when another woman, whose house had been closed by the police, offered to take the girl and care for her. Mrs. Bradshaw had been deeply interested in the story. It seemed unusual that a keeper of a house of prostitution should have attempted to save a girl from a charitable institution. She asked for the woman's address, and it was given her. When she arrived at

In a Limousine

the place she had been admitted by a maid. She was now waiting to see the woman.

The room in which she sat was small but tastefully furnished. There were many books on the shelves, and near her was a piano, on the rack of which stood music which she had never associated with that part of the city—selections from the better-class operas, selections from Mozart, a transcription of a Beethoven sonata, and others of a like nature. The furnishings of the room were quiet and unostentatious and breathed forth an atmosphere of culture.

As she sat wondering at the uncommonness of her surroundings, the curtains parted and a tall, quietly-dressed, refined-looking woman entered.

"I am Miss Dumond," the newcomer said graciously, approaching the other woman. "Blanche Dumond—perhaps you have heard my name."

The visitor introduced herself also.

"It was very good of you to come, Mrs. Bradshaw," the woman said politely. "Is there anything I can do to help you? I have heard of your work here among the—women, and I have read a little of it in the newspapers. . . . I believe you are doing the right thing."

Martha Bradshaw was taken a little aback at the other's quietness and good-breeding.

"I came to enquire about the sick girl you so generously offered to care for," she explained. "I wanted to know if there isn't something I could do, or some help I can give."

"You are very good," Blanche Dumond replied, seating herself. "But I have quite a little money, and as long as that lasts the girl will need no other help. . . . I am leaving the city very soon, and I shall take the

The Eternal Magdalene

girl with me. The air in this quarter, you know, isn't very healthful."

It was over an hour later that Martha Bradshaw went out to her waiting car. During that time she had learned much. She had found in Blanche Dumond a woman of education and broad sympathies. She had been more than interested in this new acquaintance—personally as well as sociologically. After the first half-hour's chat the restraint and formality, which at first existed between them, had drifted out of their speech and they had talked together intimately and seriously of their widely separated walks of life.

Blanche Dumond had told her of cases in which help was sorely needed, cases which ordinarily would not have been revealed to an outsider. But, curious as it seemed to her later, Martha Bradshaw had taken a liking to the woman, and the woman in turn had appeared to like her. Several times she found herself comparing this woman of the Tenderloin to the good women she herself associated with daily, and, save for her conscious knowledge of this one's profession, she could see little difference between her and them. Blanche Dumond was well informed, quiet and sympathetic, gracious in her bearing, and possessed of an unmistakable air of gentle upbringing.

"Are there many of your profession who are like you?" Martha Bradshaw had asked her naïvely.

"We are not all so bad as we are painted," the woman had answered, smiling faintly at her joke, just as if it had not been founded on a serious and tragic fact.

"Will you come to my house to tea," Mrs. Bradshaw had asked her on parting, "say, to-morrow? I really

In a Limousine

feel as if I would like to know you better. There are so many things you can tell me—things of which I am terribly ignorant. And I want you to meet my husband, too. I am sure he has the wrong idea about—some of you. You will be a revelation to him. And,” she added, smiling to herself, “if you will let me, I shall invite one or two others. I feel that you could do them more good in five minutes than I could if I talked to them a year.”

More than ever she was convinced now that there was some great mistake being made in the manner in which the crusade was being carried on; and again she thought of the Woman's words to her as she had left her home that morning.

“You will come to-morrow, won't you?” She held out her hand to Blanche Dumond.

“I really believe you want me, too,” the other replied after a moment. “And if you think I can help to give your husband—and perhaps some others—a little different point of view, there would be nothing in the world I'd like better.”

On her way home Martha Bradshaw was inclined to regret the hasty impulse which had led her to invite Blanche Dumond to her house. When she had spoken to the woman about having others present at the tea, she had had in mind Judge Bascomb and the Reverend Smollet. After consideration of what she had done she was afraid of the way her husband would take it. Yet the woman's personality had appealed to her strongly. Blanche Dumond had put into words the half-formulated thoughts and opinions which for weeks had been gathering in her own mind—thoughts and opinions which she believed to be right, but which she had not dared admit

The Eternal Magdalene

even to herself. All the facts of her weeks of investigation had led her to just these conclusions, but, because they were diametrically opposed to those of her husband and to the work to which he was giving his energy and money, she had hesitated to accept them as part of her creed.

That night she said nothing to her husband of her afternoon's experience, or her plans for the following day. She wrote notes to the Reverend Smollet and Judge Bascomb, asking them to call, but giving them no hint of why she wished to see them. At breakfast she asked Elijah Bradshaw to come home early from the office, explaining that she was having some people to tea. It was not an unusual request, and he did not question her as to details.

In the afternoon he returned before the others had arrived. Martha Bradshaw went to him.

"Elijah," she said, putting her arms about his shoulders, "I don't want you to be angry with me for what I have done."

He looked at her a little surprised and waited.

"The fact is I have asked some one to come here this afternoon to see you—some one of whom you will not approve. You know how I have been working here among the women, and I believe I have found some one who can tell us things we have never guessed—a woman who can throw a new light on a great many phases of our problem to which we have been blinded. I have also asked Dr. Smollet and the Judge to come. I want you all to meet her. No one will know that she is here, and Elizabeth and Paul will be out. But I want you to listen to her. I want you, just for a half hour, to hear the other side of the case."

In a Limousine

Elijah Bradshaw drew away from his wife in a state of deep perplexity.

"Who is it you have asked?" His voice was cold.

The woman hesitated. Now, at the last moment, she feared to tell him. She regretted her act, and wished that she might retrace her steps. But she knew it was too late; so she looked her husband squarely in the eyes.

"It's Blanche Dumond," she said.

The man was too astonished to speak. When finally he had gained control of himself he demanded in a tone which he had never used to his wife before: "What do you mean by bringing this woman here to my house? . . . Where is your sense of decency?"

His manner cut the woman. A flush of resentment arose to her cheeks.

"Why shouldn't I bring her here?" she asked hotly. "It is my home as much as it is yours. You talk of your justice in all things, and yet you are horrified when I ask you to hear, first-hand, the other side of this question. You are as ignorant now as I was a month ago. That was before I went down there and found things out for myself. It would have been better if you had done the same. Perhaps, then, you would possess more mercy now, more tenderness and human kindness."

Her last words startled him. They had been the same words that the Woman he had taken into his house had used to him.

"Are you any better than I am?" Martha Bradshaw went on. "If I am willing to have a woman like this in my home because I think it is for the best, why shouldn't you?"

The Eternal Magdalene

As she spoke the bell rang. The Woman passed through the room to go to the door. The sight of her sent a pang of conscience through the man. Had he himself not brought a woman of the streets into his home? And had he not lied to his wife about it? Now when she, out of the bigness of her heart and her desire for justice, had invited another woman of the same kind for a brief visit, what self-justification did he have for resenting his wife's act?

"I understand why you brought her here," he said, in a modified tone, "and I'll see her."

The Reverend Smollet entered. Shortly after the Judge came, beaming and jovial.

They had chatted but a moment when there was a sound of a machine outside. In a moment the bell rang again. The Woman went to the door and opened it. When she saw Blanche Dumond she stepped back involuntarily, and her free hand went to her breast. The visitor, however, looked at her without a word, although when she entered she smiled enigmatically.

The Woman took the card and brought it to Martha Bradshaw, who excused herself and greeted Blanche Dumond at the doorway.

"Gentlemen," she said, as she re-entered the room, "I want to introduce some one who I dare say has a vital interest in your campaign." She approached her husband. "This is Miss Blanche Dumond," she announced.

Bradshaw looked at the visitor curiously, and said stiffly: "How do you do."

Mrs. Bradshaw then turned to the Judge and the Reverend Smollet: "Gentlemen, I am sure you have heard of Miss Blanche Dumond."

In a Limousine

She stepped to the woman's side. "This is the Reverend Smollet, the pastor of our church and one of the leaders in the campaign. . . . And this is Judge Bascomb, who is also interested in Mr. Gleason's crusade."

Smollet was shocked and did not acknowledge the introduction. The Judge, however, bowed, despite his embarrassment.

"I am pleased to know you, Madam—that is, Miss Dumond," he said, with an attempt at gallantry.

The newcomer smiled pleasantly.

"I have heard much of both of you gentlemen," she said with perfect composure, as she seated herself.

"Miss Dumond has called in response to my invitation," explained Mrs. Bradshaw.

Smollet, who had been standing during the introduction, now drew his chair back a little from the circle, and sat down.

"She returns your call, I suppose," he said, and, despite his effort to be natural, a touch of irony crept into his words.

Miss Dumond looked at him with suave amusement. "Precisely, Dr. Smollet."

The minister cleared his throat.

"I had thought," he said, "that you had left the city."

"And no doubt you had hoped so, as well," the woman returned lightly. "But certain duties have kept me here. I shall leave very soon, however." She arched her eyebrows. "In the light of recent events I think it better, don't you?"

Smollet struggled hard to regain his self-composure.

The Eternal Magdalene

"Undoubtedly you are acting wisely," he answered perfunctorily.

The Judge had been inspecting her closely. His eyes twinkled.

"And may I be so bold as to enquire," he put in ingratiatingly, "where you propose locating?"

Mrs. Bradshaw regarded him with undisguised displeasure. It had been her first inkling of the Judge's character. She had always taken him at her husband's valuation and had accepted his sincerity in the movement as a matter of fact. She glanced quickly at Elijah Bradshaw, but he was looking away.

"Most certainly, Judge," came the pleasant, quiet voice of Miss Dumond. "I have just bought a very attractive country place near Sedgwick, only a few miles west of the city. I shall raise lots of chickens, and serve dinner to automobile parties."

There was something in her words that made the Judge chuckle.

"I see," he commented. "A roadhouse, they call it, don't they?"

She smiled again. "I see you understand, Judge. May I count on your patronage?"

Bascomb was now embarrassed.

"Why, you see," he stuttered, "I hardly——"

"Oh, yes, I see perfectly," the woman responded, dropping her eyes.

Smollet, conscious of his friend's predicament, said stiffly: "I trust that you are glad to get into other fields—that is, out of your old environment."

Blanche Dumond had dropped her bantering style now, and said seriously: "Yes. Personally, I am glad; though, of course, I can't speak for the others. And,

In a Limousine

personally, I hope that you gentlemen are acting wisely, although I have told Mrs. Bradshaw I have my serious doubts."

For Smollet the ice was broken. He felt more secure in the present situation. He resented the woman's comments and remarked coldly: "It is because women like you feel that we are wrong that makes us so certain that we are right."

But Blanche Dumond refused to take offence at his words. She merely smiled winningly and replied: "That's really ungallant, Dr. Smollet. You at least should be generous enough to believe that my doubts are based upon considerations other than my own private interests."

Elijah Bradshaw now took part in the conversation.

"These other considerations—may I ask what they are?" The woman's personality interested him.

Blanche Dumond turned to him quickly.

"The facts of thousands of years of experimenting in just this sort of thing, Mr. Bradshaw," she said earnestly and with conviction; "experimenting in ways and means to do away with the so-called social evil. You surely realise that in the older civilisations—of Greece and Rome, for instance—the courtesans were accepted as a prominent factor in the social organisation. To serve in the Temple of Venus was in those days an exalted calling. Dr. Smollet knows well that the Bible is filled with stories of concubinage, illicit loves and crimes of lust; and coming down to later days, I find in the history of New England that our virgin country was over-crowded with prostitutes as far back as 1630. . . . It looks as if some of the sly old Puritans had smuggled some of their English cousins over in the

The Eternal Magdalene

Mayflower. . . . Oh, I've been reading a lot on this subject lately."

Bradshaw leaned forward. He had forgotten his resentment at his wife's having brought the woman into the house. He found himself listening to her words with much interest. She was so different from what he had expected. Even her point of view was different. He had thought that she would defend the city's prostitutes on sentimental grounds, and would attempt to make an appeal to his sympathies.

"And what is your conclusion, Miss Dumond?" he asked her, as he might have spoken to one of the Directors of his corporation.

The woman drew her chair around, ignoring the others present.

"My conclusion is," she said firmly, "that, if it were possible to stop prostitution, it would have been stopped long ago; and in my humble opinion it can never be stopped until we change human nature. And," she added, "I hardly think we can do that."

"No, hardly; not all at once," Bradshaw agreed.

"And so," she continued, "if you will grant that the elemental things in human nature can not be changed to any great extent, is it not logical to conclude that it is impossible to stamp out the sins which arise from those natural impulses—which go deep into the very springs of all human causes? These points admitted, the only thing left to decide is whether it is better for a city to set apart a district where all women who elect to lead this historic calling must reside, or do as you are now doing, wipe out such a district and drive its residents to all other parts of the city. . . . I'm on one side of the question, Mr. Bradshaw, and you on

In a Limousine

the other." She arose. "So there is no more to be said."

Bradshaw did not reply. He was thinking deeply.

Smollet, taking advantage of the silence, asked with severity: "And have you no sense of shame for the part that you have played—no desire to lead a good life?"

Blanche Dumond became whimsical again, and smiled ingratiatingly.

"Possibly," she said, shrugging her shoulders. "But I'm like many of your parishioners—always putting it off until to-morrow."

Smollet was angered. He felt that the woman was in some way getting the better of him. The evenness of her temper infuriated him.

"And the stigma of it!" he exclaimed sharply, rising and facing her. "I should think you would blush to be abroad in the daylight."

Martha Bradshaw also arose. Her face was troubled, and she looked at the minister reprovingly. She would have said something had not the woman replied quickly:

"Blush! Indeed, I am glad not to have forgotten how. I am blushing for you now, Dr. Smollet, to think that you have so far forgotten your gallantry."

Smollet was confused, and flared up hotly. "You may spare your blushes if they are for me," he told her with an attempt at withering scorn. "I have no gallantries for women of your profession."

Blanche Dumond smiled again, and replied banteringly: "You may insult me, Dr. Smollet, but do not slander my profession. You know, it is the oldest in the world; it's older than history itself. It's as old as mythology. Venus, the Aphrodite of the Greeks, is

The Eternal Magdalene

its Goddess; and temples have been raised to her in all ages. History is filled with the names of her illustrious devotees."

Smollet sat down and sniffed contemptuously.

"And among her devotees," went on the other, "are names that have changed the map of the world—women's names, disciples of Aphrodite."

The Judge was heartily enjoying Smollet's anger, and sought to feed fuel to the flames.

"What names, Miss Dumond?" he asked slyly.

Still keeping her eyes on the Reverend Smollet, the woman answered: "The old friend of our school days, Helen of Troy, is one."

The minister now saw an opening, and said sententiously, waving his arm: "A myth, like your Aphrodite."

Blanche Dumond was not shaken. "Well, perhaps," she said seriously. "But Cleopatra was real, wasn't she?" She smiled at Bradshaw. "At least Marc Antony found her so."

Smollet did not reply, and the woman held up her neatly gloved hand and began counting off the names on her fingers as she spoke them.

"And there was Sappho, one of the world's greatest poets, and Phryne, the model of Praxiteles, and Aspasia, the classic mistress of Pericles, and Lais, the official mistress of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the Pompadour, and Madame du Barry, and Catherine of Russia, and Ninon de L'Enclos, and Diana de Poitiers,—women who have made and shaken empires. And then there was Lola Montez, and Nell Gwynne, the pet of princes. . . ."

"A brilliant constellation," agreed Smollet irritably. "But haven't you forgotten Mary Goode?"

In a Limousine

"I was just coming to her when you interrupted," Blanche Dumond answered, smiling sweetly.

Smollet made a deprecatory gesture and turned away, as if tired of the argument.

On seeing this the Judge remarked coolly: "Permit me to say, madam, that, while I cannot agree with you, I must observe that you are a woman of—considerable cultivation."

"Thank you so much," she replied with exaggerated gratitude. "I have had many advantages. My story might interest you, Judge, but it is too long to tell to-day. When you come to my farm, perhaps——"

The Judge lifted his hand protestingly.

"Oh, don't be afraid," the woman hastened to assure him. "I have entertained in my home men occupying the highest social positions." She was smiling again.

Then, before the Judge could answer, she turned to Mrs. Bradshaw. "Thank you so much for allowing me to come."

The other woman took her hand warmly. "We shall all be interested to hear how you get on in your—new field."

"I forgot to tell you gentlemen," she said, turning to the others, "that Miss Dumond has stayed in the city so that she might help a poor girl who has consumption."

The Reverend Smollet was not impressed.

"There are plenty of institutions that would have taken care of the girl," he informed them curtly.

"No doubt," Blanche Dumond answered. "But when a girl enters such an institution it is with a label attached to her. She is treated like an outcast, and I have had more than one girl say to me that she couldn't

The Eternal Magdalene

stand to pass under that legend: 'Home for Fallen Women.' Do you think a girl could ever recover her self-respect after that stigma?" Then her manner quickly changed. "But I really must be going. I thank you all so much for letting me talk."

She bowed graciously to Elijah Bradshaw, and went to the door, Mrs. Bradshaw following her.

She was about to go out when she turned.

"I have my car in front," she said, with a pleasant intonation, "if either of you gentlemen wish to go over town."

Smollet drew himself up, and answered tartly: "Thank you, we have an appointment."

"Oh, don't be afraid," she laughed. "It's a closed car."

But when neither of them made a sign, she turned to Martha Bradshaw and bade her good-bye.

When she had gone Mrs. Bradshaw did not return to the men, but went upstairs to her own room.

"So that's the notorious Blanche Dumond," Bradshaw remarked, obviously impressed. "I've been sitting here trying to figure her out."

The Judge was again on his dignity.

"What do you make of her, Bradshaw?" he asked. "Rather unusual woman, I should say."

The other hesitated a moment, and then said slowly: "She upsets a lot of my ideas. She's so different from what I had imagined."

Smollet looked at him with marked astonishment.

"That's what makes women of her type so dangerous," he remarked. "She wears a veneer of culture and gentility, and beneath it is——" He floundered about for a word.

In a Limousine

Bradshaw arose and caught him up rather sharply:
"Is what?"

Then he walked to the window, his hands behind him.
"I imagine that, after all, she is a good deal like other women. No doubt she has her own ideas of honesty."

He thought of the Woman in the house.

"If we knew more about her we could, perhaps, judge her better."

CHAPTER IX

GREY THREADS OF A SPIDER-WEB

WHEN Bellamy went to his office at the *Star* the next morning, he found a note on his desk saying that Duncan Harrison wished to see him immediately. The summons was out of the ordinary, and Bellamy sensed trouble at once.

When he entered the manager's private office that man wore a troubled look and sat toying with his pencil—an unusual state of affairs, for Harrison was a hard worker, and none of his staff had ever found him idle.

"Sit down, Bellamy," he said, without looking up. "Things are in a mess, and there's hell to pay. I don't know just what to do, and I want you to undertake a delicate, diplomatic job for me." He hesitated, not knowing just how to proceed.

"Anything the matter with the paper, sir?" the younger man asked anxiously.

"No, not the paper. I almost wish it was." Harrison dropped his pencil, and looked around squarely.

"The truth is," he announced, "young Bradshaw is an embezzler."

Bellamy was too startled to speak.

"Paul Bradshaw a thief!" he exclaimed incredulously. "I can't believe it, Mr. Harrison. There is some mistake."

"No, my boy, there is no mistake," the other man as-

Grey Threads of a Spider-Web

sured him. "At first I was inclined to feel as you do, and I went down personally to verify it. . . . No; there is no mistake," he repeated. "It's the truth."

Bellamy now thought of the girl he loved and of the suffering this thing would bring her. His first impulse was to find ways and means of keeping it from her.

"Who knows about this?" he asked, with deep concern.

"As yet," Harrison replied, "nobody knows except the bank directors, the city editor and myself. Not even Bradshaw's father knows it."

"Then it can be hushed up?" Bellamy asked eagerly.

The other man shook his head dubiously. "I don't know. That's the worst of it. You know old Bradshaw. When he finds out, he will go up in the air. There is no telling what he will do. His code is so strict that he may demand that the thing be given publicity in order to punish his son."

"I know what you mean," Bellamy returned. "He's not a man who would spare himself if he thought, by doing so, it would be wrong. He's an old walrus—you can almost admire him for it." Then he said, as if to himself: "Poor Bess!"

"Well," remarked the other, "I am not going to run the story until I find out what Bradshaw's attitude is in regard to the matter. . . . Now, what I want you to do, Bellamy, is to go and break the news to him. Tell him the circumstances, and see what he says. . . . Gad! it will put a crimp in this campaign if the matter ever gets out!"

"What are the circumstances?" Bellamy asked.

"Simple enough," Harrison told him. "Perkins, the

The Eternal Magdalene

inspector, came in suddenly yesterday after banking hours and went over the books. He was going to California for a trip and didn't know when he would get back, so he thought he'd check things up before he went. Well, it didn't take him long to find that young Bradshaw was considerably short. The boy had not tried to doctor his books. It looked as if he had taken the money in a hurry and had intended to fix up the shortage when he got a chance. Perkins telephoned Quincy, the President, as soon as he found the deficiency; and last night Quincy got in touch with me, just as I imagine he did with the rest of the Directors. He was furious about it, especially as there seemed to be no reason why young Bradshaw should have dipped into the bank's funds, and had got the job on his father's pull. He was going up to old Bradshaw at once, but I held him off and asked him to let me see about it this morning. He told me he'd keep the thing quiet until he heard from me. As a result, the other papers haven't got it yet. As I told you, I was a little sceptical on the matter, anyway; so this morning early I went down to the bank. The boy had done a crude job. There was no chance of there being any doubt of his guilt. He simply took the money, stuffed a lot of one-dollar bills into hundred-dollar holders, and entered it up as correct. There is no telling exactly when it happened—probably yesterday or the day before. . . . What do you make of it, Bellamy?"

The young man shook his head.

"It gets me," he answered. "Paul always seemed happy. His father gave him everything he wanted, and God knows his old man has enough money. Paul always struck me as being straight. I can't dope it out."

Grey Threads of a Spider-Web

"Well, anyway it's gone, and we've got to take some kind of action on it right away," Harrison responded gravely. "Now, here's what you are to do, Bellamy. You're to go out to Bradshaw's right away, break the news to him, and see what he wants done about it. If he is willing to square the thing up with the bank, they won't prosecute. Bradshaw's got too much influence and is one of the bank's biggest depositors. As for the paper, of course we'll say nothing about it unless it leaks out in some other channel—which I don't think it will. If you let me know soon enough, I'll start the wheels going to keep it quiet."

Bellamy arose. "I'll go immediately—only, for God's sake, do what you can to hush it up."

Duncan Harrison looked up at him with a sardonic smile.

"I see that you, too, are willing to suppress a few little things. Remember your curtain lecture to me about strict honesty in the *Star*?"

Bellamy was embarrassed.

"This is a little difficult matter," he said. "You see, Mr. Harrison, I am hoping to marry Elizabeth Bradshaw one of these days, and she'd be the one that would suffer if this got out. She's only a kid, and it would break her heart to think her brother was a crook."

"Well, I hope you get her, Bellamy," the older man said, in a fatherly tone. "Anyway, you see, circumstances alter cases. Now, you have your excuse for suppressing the truth in the paper, and I have my excuse. You're young, and you think love is the important thing—that's your standard. I'm older, and I have gotten over being foolish. I suppress things because of the money side—that's my standard."

The Eternal Magdalene

"Well, by your own confession," the young man protested, "your point of view is selfish, and mine isn't."

"All points of view are selfish, my boy," Harrison returned cynically, drawing a pile of proofs in front of him. "However, we won't argue it. Hurry up to Bradshaw now, and come back here to the office as soon as you can. This is ticklish business."

"Are you sure Paul doesn't suspect anything?" Bellamy asked.

"Not a thing. Perkins was not due for two weeks."

Bellamy hurried out into the street with a heavy heart. All the way out to the Bradshaw home he speculated as to what excuse Paul could have had in appropriating the bank's funds. He thought back over his friendship with the young man, but could find in it nothing which would give him the slightest hint as to the cause of his defalcation. Had the information come from any other man save Duncan Harrison, he would have doubted its authenticity, but he knew how careful and exact that man was. Harrison would have left no loophole for a possible error before sending him on his present disagreeable mission.

What worried him most was Elijah Bradshaw's character. Bellamy knew him to be hard and obdurate, fearless and unforgiving, ready to sacrifice even those whom he loved to a principle. If Bradshaw demanded an exposure of the whole thing, it would mean sorrow and pain for his daughter; and this possibility cut Bellamy more deeply than any other phase of the situation.

As he stepped up to the front door he met Elijah Bradshaw on the point of leaving.

"I have come to you on a matter of vital importance,

Grey Threads of a Spider-Web

Mr. Bradshaw," he said, without even greeting the older man. "You can't go just yet; I must talk with you alone."

"What's the trouble, Bellamy? Ride with me downtown, and we will discuss it."

"That wouldn't do," the other persisted.

"It will have to do," the man returned curtly.

Bellamy took him by the arm. "Mr. Bradshaw, you will be sorry if you don't listen to me at once." Something in his tone made the other hesitate.

"Well, Bellamy," he said, "if you are going to scare me into submission, I suppose I'll have to do what you ask."

He turned and re-entered the house.

"Now, what is it?" he demanded, with considerable annoyance, when they were alone in the library.

"I am here on a tough job," the young man began earnestly. "I'd rather take a licking than tell you. But I'm here from the paper—it's about Paul."

Bradshaw showed surprise. "Paul? What about him?"

"Well, it's the bank. An investigation was held late yesterday afternoon."

The other man could not understand Bellamy's deep concern. To suspect his son was the farthest thing from his thoughts.

"Investigation about what?" he asked. "What are you driving at? Why do you come in here and drag me back from my work to talk about bank transactions? Why don't you talk to Paul? He tends to that end of it."

Bellamy sighed heavily. The interview was more difficult than he had imagined.

The Eternal Magdalene

"I know all that, Mr. Bradshaw," he said, after a moment. "But it is about Paul that I have got to tell you,—there has been a shortage."

Still Bradshaw did not understand. "Well, what of it? Paul's merely the assistant cashier. He is not morally responsible for any irregularity of that kind. If some one is short or has stolen from the bank, there is no occasion for any alarm. The bonding company will make that good. They certainly can not attach any responsibility to my son. They will have to go higher up."

Bellamy clinched his teeth resolutely. He was wasting time. He turned to Bradshaw resolutely.

"It is not a question of responsibility," he said firmly. "It is a question of guilt. Don't you see I have been trying to break it to you as gently as I can? Paul is charged with the shortage! Everything is being held up until your decision is heard."

The older man's face went pale. He sat down in his chair heavily, as if he had been struck a violent blow.

"Paul charged with it!" His words were scarcely audible.

There was a moment's silence.

"Come, young man!" he said, but his voice was without conviction. "This is too serious a thing to joke about."

Bellamy went over to the stricken man.

"Can't you see I'm not joking?" he asked sorrowfully. "It is because it is so serious that I have come to you. We must do something."

Bradshaw narrowed his eyes, and thought a moment.

"Wait!" he exclaimed, and there was a note of hope

Grey Threads of a Spider-Web

in his tone. "Who told you this? Who says my boy——"

"Perkins," Bellamy cut in. "He tipped the Directors off last night. This morning at the office Harrison sent for me. He is one of the Directors, you know, and he put a brake on the whole affair, and hustled me over to you. If we act quickly, and in the right way, the whole thing can be hushed up without a whisper. It's up to you."

Bradshaw had heard only the one word, "Perkins." There was no doubt now in his mind as to his son's guilt. Bradshaw knew Perkins well. He was a careful, conscientious and honest man.

"So Perkins examined the books, did he?" His tone was hopeless and resigned.

He looked down at the floor, and all the strength seemed to have departed from his body. He thought of the letter which the girl, Mabel Mordaunt, had sent him. It was still in his pocket. The words of her curse were written indelibly on his mind; and now they flashed out in his brain in symbols of fire. He thought also of his son's disobedient conduct for the past few days, of his late hours, and of his refusal to stay at home.

For a moment his emotions were many and dissimilar; but as he sat, letting his mind go over the many recent events, they resolved themselves into a single wave of anger toward his son. Slowly his relaxed muscles became hard. His hands clinched, and he arose to his full stature, looking straight ahead of him with fierce determination.

"If it's true," he said slowly and deliberately, "it shan't be hushed up. Hushing it up won't help *here*."

The Eternal Magdalene

He struck himself on the heart.

Bellamy feared his decision, and came to him quickly.

"But it isn't as bad as you think. It's only a small amount," he said, attempting to console the other.

"The amount doesn't matter," Bradshaw flashed back. "You say my son's a thief. That's the thing that stabs me like a knife. And if he is a thief, he shall pay for it. I won't condone his sin."

As he spoke, the Woman entered from the hallway, carrying a fresh bouquet of flowers. She walked silently over to the desk, and began arranging them in a vase.

The two men had not observed her, but she stood for a moment, watching them closely.

"You wouldn't let Paul go to jail," Bellamy protested.

"I'd send him to jail myself," Bradshaw replied unyieldingly. "Even though he's my son, I shall have no mercy. Because he is my son is no reason he should go free. I have always taken my medicine. He must take his."

A look of infinite grief came into the Woman's face. She clasped her hands on her breast, as if fighting with a secret pain. Impulsively she stepped toward Bradshaw, and put her hand on his arm.

"Your wife," she reminded him, meeting the man's eyes.

Bradshaw started like a man frightened by some supernatural apparition. His jaw dropped, and his lips trembled.

"Remember!" the Woman went on in a voice which Bellamy could not hear. "The sins of the fathers!"

Then she turned and walked to the window, where she stood waiting expectantly.

Grey Threads of a Spider-Web

Bradshaw followed her with his gaze, and for a minute he stood transfixed.

"If I save him," he said aloud, as if in conclusion to some decision which had taken place in his mind, "it will be for his mother's sake."

His manner had changed. His severity had left him; and he crossed the room slowly and looked down into the open fire.

"What can he have done with the money?" he asked, wonderingly. "I have never allowed him to want for anything. He has had everything he asked for—everything."

He thought a moment.

"Gambling!" he exclaimed suddenly. "The stock market—or worse. That's what's done it! . . . But why didn't he come to me?"

"My suggestion is," Bellamy said, "that you see Paul right away. Then I can go back to Harrison before it goes any further. He'll quash it with the bank officials."

Bradshaw pulled himself together and looked up. "That's the thing to do. Moralising won't help us. You hurry back to the office, my boy, and I'll 'phone you by the time you get there. Do what you can."

"You know I'll do that, Mr. Bradshaw," the young man said as he went out. For Elizabeth's sake he was happy.

Bradshaw turned to the Woman.

"Tell my son to come here quickly." He had already determined on a course of action.

But the Woman did not obey him immediately. Instead, she approached him; and, despite the grief in her eyes, she looked at the man fearlessly.

The Eternal Magdalene

"Does it occur to you," she asked, in an even voice, "that your son might have stolen this money for a woman? Before you see him it might be well for you to know the reason for his guilt."

Bradshaw regarded her intently. "What woman could he have stolen for? The notion is preposterous!"

"To the contrary," came the gentle voice of the other. "He took this money for a woman—a married woman. I believe your son loves her."

This possibility had never presented itself to the man. He rebelled at believing it.

"You don't know what you are saying," he flung back angrily. "How dare you suggest such a thing to me?"

The Woman was not perturbed.

"How little you know those whom you judge," she told him with mild pity. "I myself know the girl who has brought your son to this. And it was not her fault, either. Her name is Young. Up to two days ago she lived in a poverty-stricken little flat on Orchard Street. She was married to a man who abused her. They both worked in your store. When she could bear the ignominy and suffering no longer, she left him and tried to support herself alone. She was young and pretty. Your son had noticed her at her work. He had spoken to her often, and sometimes he waited and took her home at night. When she lost her position she was penniless, and your son had no money with which to help her, although he wanted to, for he felt sorry for her. Finally he stole from the bank that he might save her from starvation and give her a pleasant home in which to live. That's what your son did with the money. He intends to marry her when she gets her divorce."

"If this is true," the man declared, looking through

Grey Threads of a Spider-Web

narrowed lids, "he shall go to jail. The bank can prosecute. I wash my hands of him."

He took the Woman roughly by the arm.

"But how do I know you are telling me the truth?" he asked brutally. "It's all been so strange—your coming here to this house. . . . And now—this. How could you know these things? . . . I'll not believe it; I'll not believe it."

The Woman smiled hopelessly. "Then why don't you find out the truth from him?"

"I will. I'll ask him at once. Tell him to come here."

The Woman started to go, but stopped and looked back.

"Remember he is your son," she said pleadingly. "Remember Blenheim."

While Bradshaw was waiting for his son he tried to straighten out the tangled skein of the new events which had taken place in his life. Although, in a measure, he felt guilty, he could not shake off his anger towards the boy's actions. Some instinct told him to forgive his son. But, on the other hand, he felt the urge of a strong determination to punish the young man.

In a few minutes Paul Bradshaw entered, collarless and in his dressing gown.

"What's up?" he asked irritably. "Couldn't you let me finish my toilet?"

The older man attempted to control his temper. He did not want to give free rein to his feelings. In a moment he had himself partly under control.

"My boy," he said, "you have been found out."

Paul started slightly, but recovered himself at once.

"What do you mean, 'found out'?" he asked, simulating indifference.

The Eternal Magdalene

Bradshaw came close to him. "The bank—there was an investigation yesterday afternoon. The shortage was discovered."

Even at this the young man put on a brave front. "There was no shortage that I know of. What are you driving at?"

The older man put his hand on his son's shoulder.

"It's no use, my boy," he said. "Perkins was there yesterday. He's at the bank now."

Paul's self-composure left him at once. He dropped into a chair.

"Then the jig is up," he muttered.

"You mean you are guilty," Bradshaw corrected him.

"I mean I am short," the other fenced doggedly. "God knows I meant to make it good."

Bradshaw looked at him and spoke bitterly. "You meant to! You meant to! It doesn't matter now what you meant to do."

There was a pause in which the father regarded critically the broken figure of the young man.

"Why didn't you tell me before it came to this?" he asked.

"I couldn't. I was ashamed to," the other answered, gulping painfully, without looking up.

Bradshaw's voice changed. "I want you to tell me what you did with the money."

"I spent it—that's all," came the feeble answer.

Bradshaw watched him angrily. "You won't say? Are you ashamed to tell me how you spent this money?"

"Perhaps."

"Then I'll tell you," the father said. "I heard, but I wouldn't believe. You spent it on a woman—a married woman——"

Grey Threads of a Spider-Web

At this the young man leapt up.

"It's a lie!" he shouted.

"I believe it's the truth," Bradshaw continued, without changing his tone. "You spent it on a woman in Orchard Street."

Paul Bradshaw saw now that there was no need of further dissembling. His fear turned into defiance, and he faced his father belligerently.

"Well, now that you know it," he asked challengingly, "what are you going to do about it?"

As his father did not reply immediately, he went on: "But it makes no difference what you do, I'll never give her up."

At this sudden change in front on the part of his son, Elijah Bradshaw lost his self-control. His instinct toward forgiveness left him.

"When you are in jail, you will change your mind," he answered harshly.

The young man had been unprepared for this pronouncement. He did not believe his father would take such heroic measures. His defiance left him as quickly as it had come. He saw that it was no use to combat the older man. When he spoke again his voice was broken and frightened.

"You won't let me go there, father," he begged. "Think of your own pride and position! Besides, you know it would kill my mother."

Elijah Bradshaw hesitated and thought a moment. At his son's reference to Martha Bradshaw his determination once more broke down. He felt himself weakening. He thought again of the Woman and of her words exhorting him to remember Blenheim. For some reason, which he could not understand, he knew that

The Eternal Magdalene

he would be unable to carry out his resolve to punish the boy.

"If I save you," he said slowly, weighing each word, "it will be for your mother's sake. But you must promise me, if I get you out of this, that you will give the girl up."

The young man forgot his fear.

"Never!" he cried. "I'll marry Ruth as soon as she is free."

"Ruth!" exclaimed Bradshaw. "Is her name Ruth?"

The young man was startled by his father's voice, and the look on his face.

Before he could answer the Woman appeared at the door.

"Did you call?" she asked.

Receiving no answer, she added: "That's strange. I thought I heard some one call my name."

"*Your* name! Is your name Ruth?" Bradshaw looked at her as if her words had contained something sinister and terrifying.

"Yes," said the Woman, "my name is Ruth."

Bradshaw wavered slightly and dropped into a chair as if stunned. His mind had gone back thirty years. The girl whom he had deserted in Montreal had been named Ruth, and only a few days before he had read that name at the end of her old love letters which he had brought forth from their hiding-place the night the Woman appeared to him.

"That is all," he said feebly, waving his hand for the servant to go.

He then looked at his son. A great change had come over the older man.

"Now listen," he said, and his voice was no longer

Grey Threads of a Spider-Web

cold. "I'm going to make good this money. I'm going to see that the matter is hushed up. You will be asked to resign from the bank. I will insist that you leave, for it was through my personal influence you were given the position. And I think it would be best for you to go away from Edenburg for a while. I want you to go to some other city—to start in again alone, with a clean slate. I want you to do it without help. I want you to prove to me that this has only been a slip. I think I can explain the matter to your mother so she will not suspect that anything is wrong; but I don't want you here in my house until you have proved your good faith. I couldn't face you, knowing that you were a thief. . . . It's the only thing to do. Go and pack your things at once—and God grant that you may make good!"

"Don't send me away, father," the young man pleaded. "Let me stay."

"It's no use," his father told him. "You have disgraced me with many of my business associates. I shall always blush whenever I meet one of the bank's directors. There is no place for you here in my house at present. You must go,—that is the condition on which I am willing to help you."

Without a word the young man went to his room and began making ready for his departure.

Elijah Bradshaw found his wife in the garden, and told her that their son had decided to try his hand in other fields. As he was explaining to her, he saw a look of doubt and disbelief come into her eyes. When he had finished she turned to him sorrowfully.

"If you think it is best, Elijah," she said, "of course I will not offer any objection."

The Eternal Magdalene

She asked no questions, but Bradshaw felt uneasy, for somehow he felt that the gentle woman was unconvinced by his explanation of why Paul was going away. However, he called up Bellamy and explained what had been done.

Then he drove downtown and arranged for his son's transportation.

That night after dinner, when Paul had bade his mother and sister good-bye, he took his father aside.

"Was it Bellamy who told you about the girl?" he asked.

"No, it was not Bellamy," the older man told him.

"But there was no one else here this morning," the other protested. "Bellamy and the servants were the only ones——"

He stopped suddenly, for he had seen the Woman pass into the library at the far end of the hall.

"I know who it was!" he announced. "It was that new maid you have here. I have seen her somewhere before. Who is she, anyway? There's something mighty strange——"

"There is nothing strange," put in Bradshaw, with an attempt at unconcern. "And it makes no difference who told me."

He glanced at the clock.

"I am going to walk with your mother and sister to the Tabernacle. I'll be back in half an hour. Then I'll go with you to the station."

Bradshaw had not intended that there should be anything even approaching a reconciliation between him and his son. But all that day, as the time drew near for the young man to go, his conscience had troubled him more and more. As his anger had subsided, his love for

Grey Threads of a Spider-Web

his son again came uppermost, and so, at the last moment, he had decided not to let Paul go alone, but to accompany him to the train. The decision for this act had been inspired by a sudden wave of tenderness—a tenderness which heretofore had been alien to his nature.

When he told his son of his decision, the young man in a degree understood the motive that was back of it, and something gripped at his throat.

When his father had gone to the Tabernacle, he went into the library to await his return.

There he found the Woman.

CHAPTER X

THE YOUNG GENERATION

FOR a moment Paul paid no attention to her. She was arranging some books on the shelf, and her back was to him. He had just beheld a new phase of his father's character, and it had mellowed him in his attitude toward the older man. Elijah Bradshaw's offer to go with his son to the train, with the touch of sympathy and paternal affection which it implied, was inconsistent with all that obdurate man's previous acts. Paul wondered what could have brought about the change in him; and, for the first time in his life, he felt a sense of shame and regret at having caused the other any suffering. His attitude toward his father had always been an antagonistic one. Now, as the two were about to separate, perhaps for all time, this attitude disappeared. Paul felt that he had come closer to an understanding of his father's nature than ever before.

As he sat awaiting the other's return, going over in his mind the details of the day, he again wondered how his father had learned of the girl for whom he had taken the money. He looked at the Woman who stood a little way from him, and could not help feeling that in some way she was responsible.

At first he had accepted her presence in the house without question, but, ever since the night when she had sat up for him and admitted him, he had felt that

The Young Generation

she was not merely a common servant. He believed that, no matter how deceived his father or mother might be, there was a mystery attached to her presence. By nature he was sceptical and a little suspicious, and as he watched the Woman arranging the volumes of books, some impulse prompted him to question her.

"Look here," he said, not unpleasantly, "I want to ask you a few questions."

When the Woman had turned to him he looked at her sharply.

"Who are you, and why did you come here?"

"You know that I am a servant," she answered, meeting his eyes steadily. "And your father gave me a place here because he knew where I came from."

Paul Bradshaw was not satisfied.

"Of course, I know you pose as a servant," he said, "and I presume my father knew who you were before he engaged you. But that isn't all there is to it. You're not like any other servant I've ever seen." Then he remarked: "There's something wrong somewhere."

"Yes, there is something wrong somewhere," the Woman agreed, with a slight smile.

She looked away and added, as if to no one in particular: "But perhaps things will be better some day."

Paul scrutinised her curiously. "I knew there was something the matter. . . . Come, tell me what it is. I'm going away, and I won't tell the governor."

"I know you are going," the Woman replied, "and I am sorry. I had hoped your father would let you stay. If things were not wrong here you would be staying."

"You seem to know a lot of things," the young man

The Eternal Magdalene

answered her with sarcasm. "I suppose you know why I am going away."

"Yes, I know that, too," the Woman responded quietly.

The young man leaped to his feet.

"What do you know?" he demanded angrily.

His suspicion that it had been the Woman who had informed his father about the girl in Orchard Street flashed back over him suddenly.

"Say, look here; did you tell my father anything?"

"You mean about Ruth Young? . . . Yes, I told him." The Woman's voice was calm.

"You told him!" Paul swung around and glared at her. "What business have you interfering in my affairs. . . . Who are you, anyway?"

"Perhaps you have seen me before," the Woman answered, coming closer to him.

He studied her face a moment.

"You do look familiar," he drew out slowly. "Your eyes!—I have seen you somewhere." Then his anger returned to him. "But that doesn't tell me why you should go blabbing to my father. I'll fix you for tipping him off to my business."

"How?" the Woman asked quietly.

"I'll have you fired—that's how." Paul's anger had got the better of him. "I'm beginning to get wise to you. You're too smooth to suit me. Do you know what I think you are? I think you are a plant here for some crook, and I'm going to put the old man next when he comes back."

"I shouldn't advise you to speak to your father about me," the Woman admonished him indifferently. "Perhaps he knows more about me than you do."

The Young Generation

The young man was not sure of himself. There was something in the situation of the Woman being in the house that he could not fathom. He knew how careful his father was about servants, how strict he was in regard to their references. Also he knew that Elijah Bradshaw was shrewd, and it seemed unlikely that he could have been deceived about any of his employés.

"Well, at that," he admitted, "maybe the old man does know what he is about. Only, what I'd like to know is how you found out about me, and why you should try to get me into trouble?"

"I didn't try to get you into trouble," the Woman answered tenderly. "I wanted to help you. I've wanted to help you ever since I have been here. I thought maybe your father would be more lenient with you if he knew that you had stolen for a woman. I had my reasons for thinking so. Perhaps, after all, he might have let you go to jail if he hadn't known the truth. He's hard and unforgiving. Things have to be brought home to him very closely before he will give in."

The young man was silent.

"You see," she went on, "I wanted him to know that your theft wasn't altogether a selfish one, but that it was due to weakness—to the weakness of your love; and I wanted him to know, too, that even that love of yours was a weakness. I wanted him to realise that, if he sent you away or let the bank prosecute you, you would not be the only one who would suffer, that also the girl would be left alone and hopeless. If he knew all these things he would understand that, in sending you away or letting you go to jail, he would be forcing you

The Eternal Magdalene

to desert some one. I had cause to believe that, when he knew this, he would let you stay."

"Gad, that was decent of you!" the young man told her. "But, you see, it did no good. He's sending me away just the same, and Ruth will be as bad off as if I went to jail."

"You mean," the Woman asked incredulously, "that he has acted without making any provision for her, that your father has not thought of her, that he has said nothing to you about her?"

"Why, no," the young man replied. "He even told me I would have to give her up."

"But he gave you some money, didn't he?" the Woman asked.

"Yes," Paul admitted. "He gave me enough to get started with—where I'm going. But that was all."

"You are not going to take it all with you, are you?" The Woman looked at him expectantly. "That would hardly be fair, would it? You know the girl has no money to live on?"

The young man frowned. "I hadn't thought of that."

"You must go to her," the Woman said. "You must do what you can to help her. She loves you, and it will be hard enough for her to bear your absence. What is she to do? It will be difficult for her to get work—under the circumstances. Your father will not let her work for him. The fact that he has discharged her will make every one else in Edenburg turn her away. It will be hard on you, I know, to go without money; but had you thought that it will be much harder for her? After all, she is the weaker, and you owe something to her for her love."

The young man sat for a long time in deep thought,

The Young Generation

his face in his hands. The Woman's words had stirred him strangely. They awakened in him a point of view which, during the stress of his own misfortune, he had lost sight of.

But he could not altogether shake himself free from the mystery attaching to the Woman, who had now stepped back into the shadow of the portières and was watching him anxiously. How did she happen to know so much about his personal affairs? Why was a woman like her playing the uncongenial rôle of a servant? What could be the meaning of her presence in his father's house? And why should she have taken so vital an interest in the things which did not affect her personally?

Before he had brought himself to answer her, Otto entered the room. Despite his calm demeanour, his voice shook nervously when he announced that there was a police officer at the side door who wished to see Elijah Bradshaw.

The young man's face grew pale. He clasped his hands nervously, and sprang to his feet.

"What does he want?" he asked shakily.

"He didn't say," replied the man. "He asked to see your father."

The other hesitated, and looked at the Woman as if for help. But she did not move or change her expression. It occurred to him that there had been some miscalculation on the part of his father, that the bank officials had taken action without waiting for Elijah Bradshaw's decision. He knew his father would be returning from the Tabernacle very soon, and he decided it were best to see the officer and detain him until the older man should return.

He lighted a cigarette with trembling fingers, and

The Eternal Magdalene

tried to reason the matter out; but his brain was in a panic.

"You'd better have him come in here, Otto," he said in a strained voice. "I'll see him—until the Governor returns."

He threw his cigarette away nervously, and lighted another.

"Perhaps it's about something else," came the steady voice of the Woman, although she did not move from where she stood half hidden in the gloom of the heavy curtains.

"What else could it be?" His voice still shook. He looked fearfully toward the door through which Otto had gone.

At that moment the man reappeared, accompanied by an officer.

"You may go, Otto," he said, assuming an easy air.

The officer was a heavy-set Irishman, with a close black moustache. He wore civilian clothes and a soft black hat. His appearance was aggressive and formidable, and he looked at the other man with a little surprise.

"You're not Mr. Bradshaw, are you?" His words were cold and businesslike.

The young man had put on a brave face. He half leaned and half sat on his father's desk.

"I am Mr. Bradshaw, junior."

"Oh, I see!" replied the officer. "But it was your old man I wanted to speak to."

"He's not here now." Despite his efforts, there was a tremor in his voice. "But you can tell me, I guess. . . . What's the trouble?"

The Young Generation

The other man hesitated. Then he jerked his head slightly, as if he had made a decision.

"I guess I can tell you about it. It's about a woman you've got working here. I was sent to get a line on her. My name's Burke; I'm from headquarters."

Paul Bradshaw was noticeably relieved. He straightened up and puffed vigorously at his cigarette.

"Oh, is that what you have come here for? A girl? We have several girls working here. What one do you want to know about?"

The officer reached in his pocket and drew forth a note-book.

"Accordin' to our dope sheet," he said, looking at the book, "her name's Packard. We got the tip that she come here yesterday. Did you have a dame start workin' then?"

The young man glanced at the Woman.

"Yes, I believe so. What about her?"

"Well, accordin' to this," the officer explained, reading, "her height's five foot four inches, weight about a hundred and thirty, red hair, eyes uncertain colour, rather good looking, age about twenty-five."

The young man smiled slyly. He was thinking that his suspicions about the Woman being a thief's accomplice were about to be realised.

"Yes, that description fits her," he said with guarded irony. "What has she done?"

"It's up to me, Mr. Bradshaw," the officer announced confidentially, "to tip you off that up to last Tuesday she was an inmate of a house of prostitution run by Daisy Stafford on West Street."

The young man whistled softly and shook his head several times in wonderment.

The Eternal Magdalene

"So that's it, is it!"

"If the Jane's here," the police informer went on, "I'd like to look her over."

At these words the Woman stepped from out the darkness, and confronted the officer.

"Here I am," she announced resignedly.

The man regarded her with triumphant amusement.

"Sure, you are," he said ironically. "I made you the minute I lamped you."

He turned to Paul Bradshaw.

"You see, sir, we know 'em by sight."

"What is it you want me to do?" the Woman asked quietly.

The officer refused to be impressed by her manner.

"The first thing," he said, "I'm going to wise these people up to who you are; and then I want you to report to headquarters just where you beat it to next."

"But suppose I stay here?" the Woman asked.

"Well, if you stick here, you're to kick in with a weekly report just the same."

He laughed cynically.

"Say, you've got a swell chance of staying here when old man Bradshaw gets hep," he told her.

"Gad! Father'll have seven kinds of fits when he finds out who she is," the young man put in, eyeing the Woman amusedly.

"Well, it's up to you to tip him off," said the officer, folding up his paper and giving the Woman a warning look.

"Now get this," he added to her, "and get it straight:—it's little bright eyes to the station once a week, or we'll be backing the wagon up for you. Remember!"

The Young Generation

"I'll remember," answered the Woman, as the officer went out.

When he had gone the young man scrutinised the Woman closely, and a smile spread slowly over his face.

"So that's who you are!" His tone was a trifle arrogant. "Thought you'd pull the wool over my eyes, did you? Well, you're pretty slick, at that. Now I'll show you how I'll get even with you for blabbing to the old man. You know what he thinks of girls in your line of business. Why, he's bossing this whole campaign right now to put the Tenderloin out of business."

He laughed heartily. "Say, it's a great joke on him, to have you here."

"You'd better take my advice and not bring the matter up with your father."

There was something in the Woman's voice that made the man wonder if, after all, she was not right. But after a moment's thought he dismissed the possibility of his father knowing the true state of affairs.

"Well, I'm not going to take your advice," he said airily. "You might fool the old man, but you can't fool me."

The Woman ignored his remark.

"What about the girl?" she asked.

"Well, what about her?" The man was in a different mood now. "I guess she can take care of herself. She always has. Suppose she had never met me? She'd be in a worse fix, wouldn't she? At least she's got a decent place to live now."

"You're not going to help her?" asked the Woman sorrowfully, "and you are not sorry?"

The Eternal Magdalene

"Sure, I'm sorry," he replied indifferently. "She's a good sort. But where do I get off if I give up my money? I've got to look out for number one, haven't I?"

"But what's to become of her?"

"What's that to me?" The man spoke irritably. "I guess she can win another home with her looks,—it's a cinch."

"And yet she gave up everything for you, didn't she? She gave up her friends, her respectability, her good name. And she was a good woman before you came into her life."

"Oh, I suppose so," the man agreed. "But what's the idea? . . . Say, you've got your nerve pulling this kind of talk with me."

He looked at her threateningly.

The Woman stood a little in the shadow. The beauty of her face was made even more beautiful by the soft lighting. Her hair glowed dully. Her eyes, full of sorrow and appeal, were on the man's. Her lips were slightly parted and seemed unusually red.

As Paul Bradshaw looked at her he was startled by the picture she made. His resentment toward her died away, and he was conscious only of the Woman's physical attractiveness.

"Gad, you're pretty!" he exclaimed. "Somehow, you remind me of Ruth."

He approached her, feeling in some strange and indescribable manner that the girl who loved him was in the room.

"Come, give me a good-bye kiss," he said.

As he approached her, she stepped back.

The Young Generation

“None of that now,” he commanded sharply. “Who do you think you are?”

He reached for the Woman, but she drew away from him.

The man was piqued.

“You’re going to kiss me good-bye—do you hear?” he said sharply. “I’m not the kind that takes ‘No’ for an answer—especially from your kind. If you put up a fight, I’ll tell the old man who you are—and that goes!”

“Don’t! Don’t touch me,” the Woman breathed, pitiingly, rather than angrily.

The man was not deterred. He caught the Woman in his arms, and tried to force her to turn her lips to his.

At that instant, unheeded by those in the room, Elijah Bradshaw entered. He took one look at his son, and turned purple with rage.

“Paul!” he shouted.

The young man sprang away from the Woman, and met his father’s horrified gaze.

“How dare you do a thing like this in my house?” the other cried out, enraged. “An hour ago I saved you from the penitentiary—saved you, a thief, a common thief! And now I come and find—this. I could forgive you the other, but for this bestiality there is no forgiveness. . . . Now, take your things and get out! Get out and stay out!”

He pointed toward the door.

“But, father, you don’t know,” the other stammered. “You don’t know who this woman is.”

Bradshaw squared himself angrily. “And I don’t care.”

The Eternal Magdalene

"But you would care, if you knew. Only a minute ago—an officer——"

"Will you go?" roared the older man. "Or must I put you out by force?"

He went to the door and opened it.

"Pick up that suitcase."

His son obeyed him mechanically.

"Now then, out of that door, and so long as I am alive, never enter it again!"

Abashed and frightened, Paul Bradshaw went out without a word.

As he started down the front steps some impulse made him turn round. At the window stood the Woman looking at him. She wore an expression of tremendous pathos, and, although he could not account for it, he again saw in the Woman's face something that reminded him of Ruth Young.

He went slowly down the street from his home. All bitterness had left him. He was ashamed of his actions and of the pain he had given his father. As he walked in the cool air, pity for the girl he loved took possession of him. He was broken and depressed, and the tragedy of his life weighed heavily upon him. He looked back at the house—his home from which he had been driven—and his eyes lingered along the familiar street with its rows of denuded maple trees. Hot tears started to his eyes and blinded his vision.

A terrible loneliness swept over him. His downfall had come so suddenly and so precipitously that he could hardly grasp the full meaning of it. He wanted to go back and beg his father for forgiveness for the sorrow he had caused him, and, strangely enough, he wanted to apologise to the Woman, for, despite the revelations

The Young Generation

of the officer, he was unable to look upon her as what she was. But he knew he could not go back. The world of his maturity lay before him, cold and inhospitable. He would have to face it alone, without assistance, without friends.

And on the top of the wave of self-pity which swept over him rode the sad face of the girl he was leaving behind. What of her? She must face the cruelty of life, just as he was now facing it; only he had every advantage. She was helpless, almost an outcast; and to her condition he had contributed much. Something tightened about his heart, and he was brought up suddenly by the realisation of the girl's helplessness.

He glanced at his watch. It was an hour before train time. He could still feel the eyes of the Woman on him, and her appeals came back to him, subtly accusing him and directing his sympathies.

Some power, stronger than he was, took him in hand, and turned his face toward the girl's house.

He hailed a passing cab and gave the driver her street number. Why was he going to her? he asked himself on the way. Why did her sorrow for the moment transcend his own? Why did he resolve to give her what little money he had? He could not answer these questions. He only knew that these were the things he was going to do—the things which something deep within him was forcing him to do.

In ten minutes he stood before her door, and it seemed as if he had never loved her so much as now. He left his suitcase in the hallway and entered without knocking.

Ruth Young sat before the fire which was the only light in the room. She was scarcely more than a girl, but she wore a look of wistfulness and submission, as

The Eternal Magdalene

if life had been cruel to her—as if she were in possession of tragic secrets which did not belong to her youth—secrets which only older women should know. She was a slender, pale girl, whose spiritual strength seemed to have been called upon to bear burdens for which she was not yet ready. Her eyes were large and deep; her mouth was frail and gentle, like the mouths of the old paintings of the Madonna. She wore a simple dress which half concealed and half revealed the lines of her girlish figure.

When Paul Bradshaw entered she glanced around quickly. Her face brightened, with a look of love and happiness.

“Something told me you would come to-night, dear,” she said simply. “I have been sitting here for an hour thinking about you. It is so hard when you are away.”

The man kissed her gently, and sat down by her side, taking her hand in his.

She looked at him from under her long lashes.

“What is the matter?” she asked sympathetically. “You look worried. Has anything gone wrong? . . . It would break my heart if anything happened to you.”

“Nothing serious has happened,” he said, assuming as easy a manner as he was able. “I knew you would need some money, and I came to bring it to you.”

The girl did not answer for a moment.

“If you only knew how I hate all this,” she said, looking fixedly into the leaping flames. “It wouldn’t be so bad if I could have you all the time. . . . I have no one now but you.”

“I know,” the man answered gently. “It is hard on both of us.”

The Young Generation

Then he forced himself to add: "Things will be better later on; I'm sure they will."

"And yet," she said wistfully, "when I plan for our future, or dream about it, there always seems to be some terrible cloud hanging over our lives. I know it's foolish, but I can't seem to get the idea out of my foolish head that I'm going to lose you. You'll meet some one else, perhaps—some one who can make you so much happier than I. And then, there is your father—if he should ever find out of our love, he'd never forgive you. He'd do everything he could to take you away from me. I think that's what worries me more than anything else."

There was a silence, broken only by the sporadic sputtering of the fire and the distant noises of the street.

"There *is* something the matter, isn't there?" she insisted at length in a frightened voice. "Ever since the other day when you took me away from Orchard Street and got me this place to live in, you have acted strangely. . . . Tell me, dear; where did you get the money for it? You always told me how strict your father was about what you spent."

The man moved uneasily. "It was money I have had a long time—money I had been saving. . . . You mustn't worry about it: I told you everything was all right."

The girl sighed a little, not altogether satisfied. But she saw it was no use questioning him.

"To-morrow," she told him, "I shall have my divorce. The lawyer said there would be no trouble about it. Then, somehow, I will be happier. I won't feel so guilty being with you. What we are doing is wrong—and you know it, dear. Sometimes I wish that we had never seen each other until this whole terrible affair was over."

The man tried to comfort her. He knew that in a few

The Eternal Magdalene

minutes he must tell her of his going away. He shrank from the task. But he resolved to have it over at once.

"Ruth," he began, in a voice of calm determination, "now listen to me, and try to understand what I am going to say. Try to be brave, and don't make it harder for me than it is."

The girl drew back from him, frightened, for in his words she felt a premonition of disaster.

"I've got to go away," the man continued in a steady voice. "It can't be helped. I am going away on business for my father. I don't know how long I'll be gone—it may be for long. But I want you to know that, if I could stay, I would—on your account. I can't take you with me, for I won't have enough money. Father has allowed me barely enough for my expenses. It all came very suddenly, and there was no way of putting it off, or of getting out of it."

The girl began to sob gently.

"I knew it—I knew it," she said. "Tell me why you are going. There's something you are keeping from me."

"I am telling you everything," he answered resolutely.

He could not bear to admit the truth—the girl's suffering would have been too keen. He felt that, at all costs, he must deceive her as to the real reason of his departure. She must never know that the comfort of the home he had secured for her had been paid for with stolen money, for he knew she then would have given it up.

"The thing is very simple," he explained. "Father has interests in Chicago, and he is too busy to leave here just now. Something came up very suddenly—something—which needed attending to. It was only natural that he should have sent me. That's why I'm going. I only found it out to-day, and this is the first opportunity

The Young Generation

I've had of telling you. . . . But you mustn't worry," he went on, putting his arm about the girl. "You know I love you—better than anything in the world, and, somehow, I don't feel that we have done wrong. You mustn't ever think that. If circumstances had been different we would be married now. But, even so, we couldn't love each other any more than we do. I'll come back to you—as soon as I can. We'll write to each other often. I shall never forget you. I shall never love any one else as long as I live."

"You talk as if you were never going to see me again," the girl sobbed.

"Of course I shall," the man forced himself to say.

Already he was planning to work hard and diligently. He wanted to succeed so that he might send for the girl and marry her.

"We are both young," he went on, trying to convince himself also. "Our whole lives are before us, and, even if I can't come back, you will come to me, and we will be happy. It may be that I'll have to stay in Chicago and take over my father's affairs, but before very long there will be enough money for both of us to live on. And the minute that day comes I will send for you. You will wait for me, won't you, sweetheart? . . . You won't forget me?"

"I'll come to you whenever you want me," she answered brokenly. "I'll wait for you always."

She did not suggest that the money he was going to give her now might be used to take her with him. Nor did she suggest that she too could seek employment in Chicago and help support herself. She felt that there was something back of his decision, which she did not

The Eternal Magdalene

understand and which he did not care to tell her. She accepted his words quietly, and without protestation.

The man arose and took her in his arms.

"It won't be long," he said again, and his voice trembled.

She turned away from him to hide her grief; and all the money which his father had given him he took secretly from his pocket and laid on the table.

The girl went with him to the door and kissed him bravely.

When he was out of sight she turned again into the room and sat down before the fire. She struggled for a moment against her emotions; but they were too great for her slender power of resistance.

She buried her face in her arms, and wept bitterly. . . .

CHAPTER XI

THE MOTH AND THE FLAME

ELIZABETH BRADSHAW was lonelier than ever after her brother's departure. She never realised before how much she had counted on his companionship. Formerly, Paul had accompanied her to all the parties she had been allowed to attend. Her father would let her go nowhere without her brother as an escort; and now she knew that these few pleasures would be denied her.

She envied Paul's going away, for, since her talk with Macy, she had dreamed much of those splendours of life which had been denied her. With thrills of intoxication she had projected herself into the world which had been described to her. Heretofore there had been compensations in her life in Edenburg. Her mind had been distracted from her pleasant visioning by the gatherings of young people in her home, or by her occasional attendance at informal parties at the homes of the other young people in the city. But when she realised that these diversions had suddenly been cut off, she began to brood more than ever. Her environment became detestable to her, and she found herself thinking more and more of Macy and all that he epitomised.

Elijah Bradshaw noticed her gloomy disquietude after his son had gone, but had said nothing about it, ascribing it to what he thought a natural grief in having lost her

The Eternal Magdalene

brother. Her mother too was inclined to attribute her melancholy to the same reason. They both endeavoured to cheer her up; but their efforts were unsuccessful. They did not worry about her condition, though, for they felt that, in time, she would regain her normal spirits.

Another thing, Elijah Bradshaw was too absorbed in his own thoughts to give much attention to her. He had suffered considerably since driving his son away. His feeling was neither one of anger nor yet of pity, but was a combination of both. His wife's sorrow and her tears at night affected him. He felt that he was in some measure guilty for the suffering she was undergoing. But, however hard he might try, he could not put his finger on anything which might, even indirectly, place the blame on him for the desolation which had fallen upon his house. For two days after his son had gone, he stayed away from his home as much as possible, leaving early in the morning and returning late in the evening just in time for dinner.

Martha Bradshaw had changed greatly since her son's departure. There were times when she sat abstractedly, her eyes gazing far ahead. She did not refer to the matter which weighed on her mind; and more than once her husband wondered secretly if she suspected anything out of the ordinary in the fact that Paul had gone to Chicago. However, instinct told him to keep his silence.

And so the subject was not brought up, except when Elizabeth would mention it. But, even then, it was not pursued to any length. She, too, was glad not to be reminded of her brother's absence, for, when she thought of him as being somewhere out in that big world of which she longed to be a part, she grew melancholy over her own condition.

The Moth and the Flame

The Woman in the house, however, seemed not to be deceived by the girl's sombre quietness. She spoke to Elizabeth often, and the girl, hungering for companionship, talked to her and confided in her.

"I know how hard it is for you here," the Woman would tell her maternally, "and I am sorry for you. I wish there was something I could do to help you. But you must try to be happy."

"How can I?" the girl asked. "It isn't as if the other girls in the city couldn't go out either. I get terribly blue reading in the papers of their parties and their dances. If only I could travel, or go somewhere! But mother is such a home-body: she never wants to go away, and father is always too busy. I wish I were a man, like Paul. Maybe father would have to send me away on business too. . . . How I'd love it!"

"Things may change some day," the Woman answered. "Your father may change, too."

The girl shook her head sadly.

"I'm afraid he never will," she said hopelessly. "He never seems to change. And, even if he should, I'll be too old to enjoy it—there won't be any life left in me. Father was even cross when Mr. Macy called—and Paul and mother were both here."

The Woman glanced at the girl.

"Do you like Mr. Macy?" she asked.

"He's awfully nice," the other answered. "And he's been everywhere. He knows all about Europe and Paris." She thought a moment. "He's different, too, from the other men in Edenburg. . . . Yes, I think I like him very much."

"I'm sorry." The Woman turned away.

"I don't see why you should be sorry," the girl said,

The Eternal Magdalene

a little resentfully. "I thought you sympathised with me? Maybe, after all, you're no different from father and mother. Every one's against me."

"He may be all right," the Woman remarked cryptically. "If things are going to happen, no power in the world can stop them."

"What do you mean?" the girl asked, annoyed and puzzled.

"Some day you will know." The Woman looked at her sorrowfully. "There are things which every woman must find out for herself."

"I don't understand you," the girl remarked petulantly, "and you're not pleasant to-day."

The Woman left the room without another word.

Elizabeth had been on the point of confiding to her how, when she had been shopping the day before and had been waiting for her mother to join her so that they might come home together, she had accidentally met Macy, and how happy he had appeared to see her. But something in the Woman's remarks had made her hesitate to relate the incident, simple and unpremeditated as it had been.

After the Woman had left the room Elizabeth went to the book-shelves and took down a volume of travel. She had read a great deal in such books lately. They had filled her with wonderful visionings, and set her heart beating faster. She always felt a little guilty when reading them, and once, when she had heard her father coming, she had hurried and put the book in its place, although she did not analyse the motive behind her act.

That afternoon she thought much of the Woman's question as to whether she liked Macy. She had been

The Moth and the Flame

fascinated by him, but she had never even asked herself if she liked him or not. Now she began thinking of the man, of his appearance, of his pleasant manners, of his descriptions of Europe, of the delight he had displayed when he had met her accidentally. The realisation suddenly came to her that she wanted very much to see him again; and at the Tabernacle that night she looked carefully at all the faces within her range, hoping that she might find him among those present. But he was not there, and she was disappointed.

She awoke earlier than usual the next morning and discovered that her mind was again on the man. After breakfast, when her mother and father had both gone away, she went into the library and began reading a travel book.

She had read only a short time when some impulse made her go to the window and look out. She did not understand the impulse, and although she was filled with some abstract expectancy, her emotions were vague and indefinite. It was with a little start of pleasant surprise that she saw Macy outside, walking briskly toward the house.

"Are you expecting some one?" came the voice of the Woman behind her.

The girl was startled, and looked around quickly. "No; what makes you ask?"

The Woman did not reply and Elizabeth turned again to the window.

Macy caught sight of her and waved to her pleasantly as he turned up the walk which led to her home.

"You had better open the door for Mr. Macy," she said to the Woman.

"Then you were expecting some one."

The Eternal Magdalene

"What impertinence!" the girl exclaimed angrily. "Go to the door."

The Woman obeyed sadly; and in another moment Macy had entered.

The Woman went out.

"Good morning, Miss Bradshaw," the man greeted her, with exaggerated amiability. "You know I told you I was leaving the city very soon. Well, to-day is the day, although I hadn't imagined it would really be quite so soon. . . . I dropped in to say good-bye."

His words, for some reason, made her unhappy.

"I'm sorry that you are going," she said.

Then, as he gazed at her intently, she became a trifle embarrassed.

"I am glad, though, that you came to say good-bye," she went on lightly. "Won't you sit down? . . . This is a surprise."

The man seated himself without taking his eyes off her. "A pleasant surprise?"

"Of course," Elizabeth answered. "But hardly a surprise at all. . . . Do you know, something told me you were coming."

"A sort of presentiment of evil?" he asked.

"Oh, no," she answered, confused. "But it's the strangest thing—I was reading just now, and, all of a sudden, I felt that you were near. I stepped to the window—and there you were!"

The man smiled at her ingenuousness.

"Just like a jumping-jack," he said. "You press the button—and there he is!"

The girl didn't know what to say to this, so she laughed.

"Even the maid noticed it," she added, just as if he

The Moth and the Flame

had made no facetious interpolation. "She asked me if I were expecting some one."

Macy asked her if he might smoke, and, being given permission, he lighted a cigarette.

"Well," he asked, after he had taken a few puffs, "are we going to be friends?"

"Surely we are," the girl answered, in an unserious tone.

"Good friends?"

"The very best."

"Let's shake hands on it," the man laughed.

The girl gave him her hand, and he took it warmly. But, when he did not release it, she forced herself to withdraw it, and went to her father's desk, where she sat down. His action had both intrigued and frightened her.

Macy smoked for a while in silence. Then his manner became serious.

"Tell me something," he said. "How can you bear to live in this detestable town?"

"That's simple enough," Elizabeth answered. "It's not a case of *bearing*, it's a case of *having to*. . . . It's my home."

"And don't you ever feel that you would like to get away?" he pursued. "Doesn't the idea ever come to you of how pleasant it would be to go somewhere else—to see more of the world?"

"Does it ever come to me!" The girl frowned and looked away. "It never leaves me."

"But surely you have travelled some," said the man. "You certainly have been to other places with your people."

"Oh, yes," the girl answered, without any enthusiasm.

The Eternal Magdalene

"I've travelled a little with mother and father. I went to Chicago once, and to New York, and even to New Orleans. . . . But trips like that only make things worse," she added gloomily. "New York seemed like Heaven to me; but we were only there a few days. I never wanted to leave it. After New York, Edenburg seemed like a village."

"I can't imagine," Macy remarked, "what the people in Edenburg find to do all the time. Where on earth do they keep themselves? Although I've lived here a long time, I know very few people. I don't go about much."

"They keep themselves home mostly, I presume." There was disparagement in the girl's voice. "And Sundays they always go to church."

Macy regarded her appraisingly.

"Tell me," he said, drawing his chair nearer to her, "would you like to get away from this place? Would you like to go out and see the world and be free and have a good time, and maybe never set foot in Edenburg again?"

"Would I!" she smiled, with a touch of happy cynicism. "I'd like to have some one give me a chance."

Macy stood up.

"You poor child!" he exclaimed.

He hesitated a moment; then he said resolutely: "I'm going to give you a chance."

The girl was startled. She looked at him wonderingly, fearing and hoping at the same time that he was able to do what he promised.

"You are going to give me a chance?" she asked slowly. "How?"

"I'm going to make it possible for you to go away."

The Moth and the Flame

He threw away his cigarette and leaned toward her, clasping his hands behind his back.

"To go away? But how? With whom?"

"With me."

She was now thoroughly frightened, but she forced herself to laugh, pretending that his words had been a huge joke which, by no possible stretch of the imagination, could be taken seriously.

"You will come?" the man persisted, ignoring her laughter.

"How funny!" She half believed that, after all, he was joking. "An elopement you mean?"

Macy came nearer to her.

"Just that," he said gravely.

Elizabeth resolved to treat his words lightly, like some game in which the imagination plays the largest part.

"But in elopements they marry, don't they?" she asked, as one who would ask questions about a fairy tale.

The man refused to meet her mood.

"Of course," he agreed seriously.

"Then this is a proposal!" she exclaimed, with childish delight, still keeping up the spirit of an impossible and fantastic game, though all the while she felt that she was defending herself from some impending danger.

"Yes," the man agreed soberly, in a low voice. "This is a proposal." He looked at her smiling face, and added fervently: "A real one."

The girl became nervous, but she forced herself to retain her air of levity.

"I know you are joking," she said with a laugh, "but—do you know?—I have a good notion to take you at your word—just to see what you will say."

Macy came very close to her. "I dare you!"

The Eternal Magdalene

Elizabeth was unable to continue in her former strain. The man's tenseness and gravity began to tell on her emotions.

"You are really in earnest?" she asked; and her manner was no longer frivolous.

"Of course I'm in earnest," he assured her. "I was never more in earnest in my life; and I want you to come with me. . . . You are going to come, because you mean everything in the world to me, because I love you."

"You're in love with me!" Her words, scarcely audible, were filled with wonderment and alarm.

"You know I am in love with you," he told her. "You have known it from the first. Why do you try to deceive me—and yourself? I've thought of nothing but you since the day we rode into the country. Why cheat yourself out of life and all the things that you deserve? Why stay here in Edenburg, when the whole world is waiting for you and me? If I didn't have to go away at once, I would wait and tell you these things later, when they wouldn't frighten you—when you had gotten used to me. But I can't wait—it is now or never. . . . You must understand. . . . Will you come?"

The girl had been struggling with her emotions during his speech. She liked him, and secretly his words thrilled her. But she thought of her mother and father, of her home and its strictness. What he proposed was so alien to the very fabric of her life. It was too big for her to grasp; but she felt its enormity and importance. She was afraid to face it. Her training had not prepared her for this step. And yet, she knew she could not argue with the man, for she wanted to go—if only she dare.

She sat for some time trying to think of an answer, of some way to refuse him. His eyes were on her, watching

The Moth and the Flame

her closely and eagerly; and she felt his fascination. Then, when she could find no adequate reply, she instinctively fell back on her old defence of bantering lightness.

She made herself laugh.

"Of course, I'll not go with you. How absurd!" Her external mood was frivolous again. "What a silly thing to suggest. . . ."

But when the man did not take his eyes from her or change his expression, she was unable to retain the artificiality of her pose.

"And yet," she went on, in a more serious voice, "do you know, I have another strange presentiment that I shall do the very thing you ask me?"

"I knew you would, all the time," Macy answered confidently.

He stepped quickly toward her and reached out his arms for her; but she leapt to her feet and stepped away from him.

"Don't—please don't," she begged in fright. "You see, my presentiment has not told me whether *I* love *you* or not."

The man was not discouraged. "But it will tell you. . . . Why do you try to avoid me? Why do you lie to yourself? I know that you love me—and you know it, too. . . . And you are going with me," he repeated firmly.

He watched to see how his words would effect her. She did not answer, but stood with her head bowed. He now went to her softly and put his arms around her. She no longer resisted.

"Where shall we meet, sweetheart?" he asked tenderly.

"Am I going—really?" she whispered.

The Eternal Magdalene

"Of course, you are going," he told her gently. "We'll take the Limited this afternoon, and in two days we'll be on the boat sailing for Europe."

She let him kiss her, and he held her close in his arms for a long time.

"But you have forgotten the most important part—our marriage," she told him.

He held her at arm's length.

"You foolish girl, we shall be married to-night. If we should be married here it would be found out. Your father would know about it, and he would stop us. Once we are away, everything will be safe."

"I don't see why I should let you do this," the girl persisted. "But somehow, when I am with you, I seem to lose my self-control. . . . I never felt this way before. . . . What can it be?"

"My dear," said the man, "it's the sweetest thing in the world—it's love."

"I'm not so sure. . . . Oh, Arnold, I'm so afraid!"

"Of me?" he asked, in pained surprise.

"Yes, of you, dear," she answered. "And of myself. It isn't that I don't trust you—but still, I'm afraid. It would kill my mother. And father——"

"But what right have they to interfere," Macy asked her, a little angrily, "when your happiness is at stake?"

"None, I suppose," she answered weakly. "But I know nothing about you. It is all so strange, and so sudden."

The man smiled confidently.

"Well, look at me," he said lightly. "I'm fairly pre-possessing—don't you think so? My family's one of the oldest in Manchester; and, as for money——"

"Arnold! You know I don't mean that," Elizabeth reprimanded sweetly. "I mean about yourself, your life,

The Moth and the Flame

your love affairs. . . . Oh, I'm not silly enough to think you haven't had them."

They were sitting close to each other on a davenport, her hand held in his tightly. The man looked away and frowned slightly.

"Why, yes, of course I've had love affairs. I won't try to deceive you about that. But there have been no real ones. . . . And what of you?" He tried to put the girl on the defensive.

"You know well enough what my life has been in this cloister," she replied, in an injured tone.

"But you have had Bellamy," the man suggested. "You loved him, didn't you?"

"I thought so, until you came," she said, suddenly remembering.

For the last two days she had forgotten the other man and his love for her. She had, however, never taken that love seriously; and when he had told her that her father had refused to let her marry him, she had dismissed the matter from her mind.

"Then you will come, won't you, dear? The man had seen the troubled look on her face at the mention of Bellamy, and wished to be reassured.

"Yes," she said firmly, as if her first conscious decision had just been made. "I'll come to escape from Edenburg, to escape from myself. If it is to be, the sooner the better."

Macy arose.

"I shall be waiting for you," he said.

He took her in his arms again and pressed her lips to his.

When he had released her, she suddenly covered her face with her hands.

The Eternal Magdalene

"How can I ever break it to my mother?" she said, with a slight sob.

"We'll write to her," the man returned quickly. "Or better still, you leave a note to be delivered to her after we are safely away. Will you do that?"

"Yes," she replied with resolution. Then she added in a broken voice: "It will be terrible—but I'll do it."

"Good!" The man looked at his watch. "It's almost ten o'clock," he said. "You had better go and get ready. At exactly four o'clock leave the house and walk to the corner. I will be waiting for you there in an auto. We will just be in time to catch the Limited from the West."

Still the girl hesitated. "But father will follow us. I think he would kill us both if he caught us."

"Let him follow," Macy said reassuringly. "He will never get us. He won't know where we have gone; and once on board the boat, we can laugh at all of them."

"I'll go," breathed the girl.

She rang the bell, and the Woman answered.

"Get Mr. Macy's hat and coat," she said.

The Woman said nothing, but walked into the hallway, followed by the man, as Elizabeth ran upstairs.

In the hallway the Woman turned and looked at Macy accusingly, without a word.

"By Jove, where have I seen you before!" he exclaimed, as he met her eyes.

"In Paris, perhaps," she answered insinuatingly. "Or Berlin. Or Moscow."

Macy gave a troubled laugh. "Now you're joking."

"No, indeed," the Woman replied. "I am not joking. You see, I have travelled a great deal; so it is possible that we have met before."

Macy studied her a moment.

The Moth and the Flame

"It is hardly probable," he said stiffly. "But your eyes do look deucedly familiar, somehow. . . . Please give me my things; I must be off."

The Woman took down his hat and coat, but did not hand them to him. Instead she looked at him questioningly.

"When is *she* going?" There was a hidden accusation in her query.

Macy started a little, but did not reply.

"When is she going?" the Woman repeated. "Is it to-day, or to-morrow?"

The man gritted his teeth.

"You have overheard—you eavesdropping devil! I have a good mind to——" He stepped toward her menacingly.

The Woman was unmoved. "Poor girl! She doesn't know."

The man's face paled.

"Know—about what?" He tried to be indifferent.

"About your wife in Southampton," the Woman said softly.

At these words Macy lost his self-control.

"Shh!" he warned her excitedly. "How did you know that?"

"I told you it is likely that we have met before." The Woman's voice was serene.

"It's a lie!" the man said, his lips twitching spasmodically. "I have no wife."

The other laughed lightly.

Macy scrutinised her. Then, seeing that deception was hopeless, he changed his manner.

"Now, see here," he asked earnestly. "Are you going to give me away or not?"

The Eternal Magdalene

The Woman shook her head hopelessly.

"What would be the use?" she, in return, asked. "If it is fate that she is to go away, she will go. Nothing can stop her. Every one must pass through fire. Everything that is to happen in the world, must happen. Even I cannot change that. . . . Poor girl!"

The man was puzzled, and looked at the Woman more sharply.

"I see you are the right sort, after all," he stammered. "See here, did you say you saw me in Paris?"

"I said I was in Paris," the Woman answered.

"How long ago?"

She reflected a moment.

"Was it five years ago?" she asked, as if uncertain.

The man started a little.

"By Jove, that's strange!" he said. "There's something about you that reminds me of——"

"The little girl you deserted in St. Cloud?" she finished.

"My God! How did you know that?" Macy's voice was frightened, and his body trembled perceptibly. "Who—are—you?" he asked, in a hoarse whisper.

"An old friend, and your very humble servant," answered the Woman.

She handed him his hat and coat, which he accepted, as in a daze.

"And you are not going to tell?" he asked incredulously. "On your honour?"

"On my honour," she said.

Macy's lips moved, but no sound came from them. With a last close look at the Woman he turned and went out.

CHAPTER XII

THE BLACK DAYS

WHEN Elizabeth reached her room she sat down and cried for a half hour. She was not unhappy, but apprehensive. In her tears there was no weakening of her determination to go away. She did not know what it was that made her cry: her emotions were too confused. The coming event was all so wonderful; yet, at the same time, it was terrible and tragic. Instinctively she knew she was doing wrong, but her desire for a change was stronger than her conscience. She told herself that she was going to be happy, that she was in love with Arnold Macy, that she had a right to break the manacles which bound her to the quiet and uneventful life of Edenburg. She recalled Macy's words to her, and they gave her strength.

She knew her life had been drab and filled with deprivation. Inwardly she had always revolted against it; and yet, as she looked round her, the little white bedroom seemed suddenly to have become very dear to her. The brass bed with its pale blue satin canopy and its lace covering, the French windows through which filtered the sunshine, the low dressing-table with its swinging mirrors and its neatly arranged silver toilet set which her brother had given her on her sixteenth birthday, the quaint Watteau prints with their curious little gold frames, the great soft blue rug, the bookcase with her

The Eternal Magdalene

own books—all these things seemed to be interwoven into her life and dreams. They were an intimate part of her earliest memories. But not until to-day did she realise the sweetness of their associations.

Now that she was about to leave them all, she knew for the first time how much they meant to her. She would have been happier if she could have taken them all with her, and already she began wondering if, perhaps, later on, her father would not forgive her and let her come back to them. She knew there was little chance of this, once she had taken the step; but she could not rid herself of the longing and attachment for the familiar objects in the room.

She did not regret leaving her father. He was hard and cold, and his demands on her had always seemed unreasonable. Though she loved him, it was with a love in which her respect for his authority played a large part. Only at times had she felt tender toward him, and, strangely enough, this was not one of the times. She asked herself why it should be necessary to run away with Macy. Why could she not have gone to her father and received his consent? Surely she was no longer a little girl. But she knew from past experience that such a request would have been fatal. He would have told her that she was too young to consider marriage; he would have become infuriated at the mere suggestion of it.

But, when she thought of her mother, her feelings were different. Martha Bradshaw had always been tender and generous. There was a close bond between the girl and the older woman—a bond of sympathy and understanding. Elizabeth looked at her mother's picture, which she always kept on her desk in a little silver frame,

The Black Days

and the hot tears started to her eyes afresh. She knew her act would break her mother's heart, and she knew, too, that the other woman was not strong and would suffer intensely. But even this knowledge did not deter her from carrying out her plan. Her desire for freedom, and for the splendid adventures which lay beyond Edenburg, was the strongest dictate in her heart. She tried to seek comfort by telling herself that her mother would understand and forgive her, though, in the very process of this self-assurance, she realised that she was seeking solace in sophistry. But she hoped, despite her own inner conviction, that her mother's suffering would not be so great as she feared.

She brushed her tears away, and went to the window. For a long time she stood looking out into the barren street. It was cold and desolate, although the sun was shining. A young man and a girl, both of whom she knew, passed by, laughing and talking. She looked at them with envy. They caught sight of her, and waved pleasantly. Their presence had a strengthening effect on the girl at the window, for it intensified her resentment against the austerity of her father's prescriptions. She had never been allowed to walk the streets alone with the young men of the city; and the fact that this other girl was doing it now, set in motion within her a wave of indignation at her father's rigid and dictatorial supervision.

She turned again to the room, and began to get ready for her first great adventure. From the closet she took a little hand-bag into which she put the few articles she would need. She knew she could not take any clothes with her—there would not be room. For an hour she packed and repacked her things, changing one article for

The Eternal Magdalene

another as she projected her imagination into the future and tried to determine the things she had to have and the things she could do without.

All the while she was becoming more and more intoxicated with the idea of her elopement; and when, at last, she had closed the bag and locked it, she was trembling with excitement. She started to change the house-dress she was wearing for a suit in which to travel; but she thought it would create suspicion if her mother should come home to lunch, and she decided to wait.

Her mother did not come home, however. The girl ate alone. She was glad of this, for she shrank from seeing her mother again before going away. She felt she might weaken in the other's presence. She ate little, for she was too nervous. Her cheeks burned with excitement, and she could hardly wait for the hour when she would step forth from her lonely and shut-in existence into that world of freedom and romance which Macy had held out to her.

Throughout the meal she was conscious of the Woman's eyes on her. They made her restless and uneasy. Her feeling of guilt was such that she imagined the Woman suspected something—perhaps this servant had overheard Macy's words and her own promise to meet him at four o'clock. But, again in her room, she dismissed these suspicions as an impossibility.

The hours went slowly until the time when she was to steal forth and meet the man who would be awaiting her. She tried to read, but the words became a jumble before her eyes, and she could not keep her mind on the printed page. Every little commonplace noise in the house startled her. Once, when Otto came to deliver her a letter from a relative, she trembled so she could

The Black Days

hardly hold it. She watched the clock constantly, and, whenever she heard a footstep on the street beneath her window, she looked out guardedly, fearing it might be her mother or father.

When there were but fifteen minutes before she was due to go, she remembered that she had not written the note she was to leave behind. Going to her desk she sat down and drew a piece of paper in front of her. A mist of tears filled her eyes as she began to write. Before she had finished she was sobbing brokenly. Now, at the very moment of departure, she felt her strength give way and her will weaken. As she had finished writing, her head fell forward on her arm; and for five minutes she wept bitterly. The reaction past, she raised up again and brushed her tears away. She looked down at the letter and reread it.

“Dearest, dearest mother,” it ran. “Please try to forgive me for what I am going to do. I don’t want you to suffer, and if you will try to understand, I know it will not seem so terrible to you. I am going away. When you get this note I will be on my way, and you will not be able to find me. I am going with Mr. Macy. He loves me, and I love him. I can’t stand it here any longer. In a short time we will be in Europe. I know I am going to be happy, and I want you to be happy, too. That you will forgive me will always be the prayer of your loving daughter—Elizabeth.”

The girl looked up at her mother’s picture, which stood facing her. She took it down and kissed it. Then she unlocked her bag and put the picture inside. It lacked only a few minutes of being four o’clock. Going back to her desk, she folded the letter hurriedly and placed it in an envelope.

The Eternal Magdalene

At that moment the door opened, and the Woman entered. She stood with one hand on the knob, looking at the girl sorrowfully and pityingly.

Elizabeth jumped to her feet, startled and frightened, holding the letter behind her.

"Oh, it's you, is it!" she exclaimed in surprised anger. "Spying on me as usual!"

"I am not spying," the Woman answered gently. "You wanted me, didn't you?"

"No, I didn't want you! When I want you, I'll ring for you."

"I was sure you wanted me," the other persisted, without moving.

The girl looked at her, wondering. Could it be that this woman suspected something? Why should she have come just at four o'clock?

"What made you think I wanted you?" Elizabeth asked her cautiously.

"I felt that you did." She remained at the door, motionless.

"Was—that all?" The girl still feared that her secret had been overheard.

The Woman nodded.

"Well, since you are here," the other said hesitatingly, "you may give this note to my mother—to-night after dinner."

"You see, you did want me, after all," the Woman said, taking the note.

"Give this note to my mother as I directed you—to-night, when she has finished dinner. Not a minute before. You understand?"

"I understand perfectly," replied the Woman. "Will you be safely away by then?"

The Black Days

"Who told you I was going away?" asked the girl, taken off her guard.

"No one told me," the Woman answered sadly. "Nor did I listen to anything he said to you. Only, I felt that you were going away."

"Well, I'm not," asserted Elizabeth resentfully. "That note is—something else."

"You need have no fear," the other told her comfortingly. "I shall tell no one. It would do no good. But I know you are going—oh, you needn't take the trouble to deny it. I know a great many things, but there is nothing I can do about them. I must wait. The time may come some day. . . . It will be hard on your mother—your going."

The girl was perplexed. She would have insisted in her denials, but she felt that they would be futile. She decided to ignore the other's remarks.

"All you have to do," she said, "is to give that note to my mother, as I told you to. You are sure you will do that?"

"I will give it to her as you have directed me," the Woman responded. "Not a minute before."

"Thank you. That is all."

The Woman went out, leaving the door open.

Elizabeth waited until the Woman's footsteps had died away at the far end of the hall below. She slipped on her coat and hat, put on her gloves, and, going to the door, listened intently. Everything was quiet. The servants were all in the rear of the house. She looked once more at the little intimate room which she was leaving forever. . . . It was neither a sob nor a moan that escaped her lips, but it was something between the two.

The Eternal Magdalene

She walked very quietly down the carpeted stairs, pausing every few steps to make sure that she was not being observed. Cautiously she opened the front door and let herself out. The chill air sent a shiver through her feverish body, but at the same time it braced her and gave her new strength. She hurried across the lawn, turned at the street, and half ran toward the corner where she was to meet Macy. She kept on the edge of the yards so that her feet would make no noise on the pavements. She was out of breath when she reached the machine which was waiting for her a little way off the main street.

Macy jumped down from the car and met her, taking her bag and pressing her hand fervently.

"I'm so frightened, Arnold!" the girl said, as she took her seat beside him.

The man laughed derisively and triumphantly as he shot away.

"Nonsense, child!" he told her. "Of course you may feel a little frightened now, but once we are safely away, you will be the happiest girl in the world."

"I hope so," she breathed sadly.

The train was at the station when they arrived. Macy had the tickets, and they immediately entered the private drawing-room which had been reserved for them. The girl was pale with fright, and very silent. When they were alone and the man attempted to take her in his arms and kiss her, she drew away from him, though she did not know why. Macy smiled, as if he understood her action, and did not urge her.

In a few minutes there was a noisy releasing of brakes, and the train gave a little jerk, preparatory to moving out.

The Black Days

The girl leapt to her feet, and started for the door.

"I can't go—I can't go! Oh, do let me get off!" she cried, as Macy intercepted her.

"Sweetheart!" he said reprovingly. "Don't be a foolish child. Think how happy we are going to be."

She wavered; and this time he took her in his arms. She became suddenly limp, and her head dropped on his shoulder. She cried, broken-heartedly.

Elijah Bradshaw did not return home until just before dinner time, and his wife, too, was late. She had spent a busy day, and her work had detained her.

As they sat down to table, Bradshaw said irritably: "Why isn't Elizabeth here? She certainly could hear the gong."

He turned to Otto. "Go upstairs and tell my daughter to come down at once."

The man left the room, returning in a few moments.

"She is not upstairs," he announced.

"What!" exclaimed Bradshaw. "She must be!"

He himself arose and went to the foot of the stairs. He called his daughter by name several times, but receiving no answer he returned to the dining-room, frowning deeply. He looked at his wife. Her face was troubled, but she said nothing.

"Did you see my daughter go out?" he demanded of the servant.

"No, sir," the man replied. "But she was in earlier this afternoon."

Bradshaw sat down angrily.

"She's probably out with some of these young runabouts," he commented, as if to himself. "If you'd stay home more, Martha," he said to his wife, "and give up

The Eternal Magdalene

this silly charity work of yours, a thing like this wouldn't happen."

He ate a moment in silence.

"She'll defy me, will she!" he exclaimed bitterly. "Well, I'll teach her a lesson about staying out! She shan't leave her room for a week—and she'll eat there, too."

"It may be all right," his wife put in pleadingly. "Elizabeth's not a bad girl. She wouldn't disobey you deliberately. She may have gone over to one of the neighbours, and forgotten the hour."

There was little conviction in Martha Bradshaw's voice. She herself was worried deeply, but she tried to keep it from her husband.

"It makes no difference," the man replied imperturbably. "She has no business running around. I've told her not to go out without permission. There can be no excuse. Mark my words: She'll regret this act."

The meal proceeded in silence. As the time went by Martha Bradshaw became more and more worried. She ate her food abstractedly, glancing constantly at the clock. Bradshaw's anger grew as the meal progressed. At the sound of every footstep which passed in the street he paused and listened intently.

At eight o'clock he went into the library. He paced up and down, his wrath growing steadily. His wife went in to him and tried to console him, at the same time defending her daughter. But he was irritable, holding her blameworthy for Elizabeth's absence. She saw it was no use to endeavour to calm him; so she went upstairs to her room.

A moment later the Woman passed through the hallway, quietly and with bowed head. Slowly she mounted

The Black Days

the stairs and went in to where Martha Bradshaw sat looking sorrowfully out of the window into the darkness of the wide street. In the Woman's eyes was great pity.

"Here is a note your daughter asked me to give you."

Eager and frightened, the seated woman turned and took it.

"Why didn't you give it to me sooner?" she asked.

"Your daughter asked me to hand it to you after dinner—not a moment before."

There was a pathos and tenderness in her voice, which kept the mother from reprimanding her for the delay.

The Woman hesitated a moment, and then left the room.

Martha Bradshaw read the tear-stained paper. . . .

A sudden convulsive movement shook her fragile body. An icy hand clutched her heart. The room grew black, and the whole house seemed to sway drunkenly and crash about her. The letter fell to the floor, and her hands dropped in her lap, the palms up-turned, the fingers furred rigidly. In a moment the lights flared up again, but they seemed miles and miles away, and not a part of her life. She tried to cry out, to call to her husband. But no sound came from her lips. It was like the terrible mesmerism of a nightmare. She attempted to raise her hands, but could not move them. They were like some one else's hands over which she had no control. The Woman came to the door again and spoke. She could see and hear the other, but could make no sign.

The Woman gasped and hurried downstairs to the library.

Elijah Bradshaw was still walking up and down, his hands working nervously behind him.

The Eternal Magdalene

"What do you want?" he snapped, before the Woman had a chance to speak. "Go; I want to be alone."

"Your wife needs you," the Woman answered. "You had better go to her at once."

He saw by the look on her face that something was seriously wrong. He did not hesitate, but went quickly upstairs. The sight of Martha Bradshaw huddled in her chair—her staring eyes, her half-open mouth, the grotesque attitude of her hands—filled him with horror.

"Martha!" he called huskily. "What is it?"

She made no move, and the man hurried toward her, dropping down on one knee and taking one of her rigid hands in his.

"Martha! Martha!" he cried. "My God! Speak to me—for God's sake!"

Still the woman made no sign.

Panic-stricken, Bradshaw arose and rushed into the hall. The Woman stood before him, waiting.

"The doctor!" he cried. "Telephone for the doctor." He was beside himself. His face was ashen, and his eyes glared abnormally.

The Woman hurried below, and in a moment he heard her talking on the telephone.

"This is Mr. Bradshaw's residence," the voice said. "Come at once. It is imperative. . . . Mrs. Bradshaw—a stroke of paralysis, I think. . . . You must hurry."

Bradshaw returned to his wife's side. "A stroke of paralysis——" The words went through him like shafts of flame. He knew his wife had not been strong, but he could not understand what had brought about this sudden collapse. He lifted her up tenderly and placed her on the bed, placing her arms at her side and straightening out her sinister, crooked fingers.

The Black Days

The Woman came in again, and her appearance comforted the man. He knew now that he needed her, and that he could trust her. He felt his dependence on her, and was glad she was there.

"There's nothing you can do now," the Woman said. "You had better go downstairs and wait for the doctor. I will take care of your wife till he comes."

He obeyed her without a word.

When he had gone the Woman very tenderly and lovingly took off Martha Bradshaw's clothes, drew on her nightdress and put her under the covers. Then she sat down and waited.

In five minutes the door bell rang. Bradshaw answered it himself.

"Come in," he said to the doctor, in a strained, broken voice. "Something terrible has happened. My wife has collapsed."

Dr. Stoner, a portly, middle-aged man, with a competent, serene face and a close-cut black beard, jerked off his coat hurriedly and threw it, with his hat, on the chair. He did not reply to Bradshaw's greeting.

The two men hurried above. As they entered the room the Woman arose and stood to one side. The doctor leaned over the bed and looked at the helpless figure, but made no comment. He sat down, raised her lids and for a moment inspected her eyes. Then he registered her pulse, lifted her arms, moved her fingers a little, and tested her reflexes.

Bradshaw watched, transfixed and breathing heavily. He had forgotten about his daughter, about his son, about all the past incidents in his life. His every interest was now deputised to the tragedy of the prostrate form on the bed.

The Eternal Magdalene

The doctor turned to the Woman, as naturally as if she had been one of his own trained nurses, and gave her instructions as to what to do. Then he took Bradshaw by the arm and led him downstairs. In the library he sat down, frowning.

After a slight pause he said—and it was the first word he had spoken to the other man since his arrival: “Bradshaw, you must prepare yourself for bad news. Your wife has had a paralytic stroke. I can’t account for it; but she must have received some awful shock which suddenly snapped her resistance.”

The husband was white and trembling. “You mean—she will never get well?”

“I didn’t say that,” the doctor returned. “But her condition is serious. She must be looked after all the time. You understand, Mrs. Bradshaw was a weak woman, and a shock which other women might have withstood, she was unable to cope with. She will get better, I can assure you of that. She may partially regain her muscular control. A great deal of it, I am inclined to think, is psychological. If her mind is relieved of this thing which has caused her collapse, her recovery is possible. I do not know what it is that has brought about her state, and I see that you do not wish to tell me——”

“I don’t know what it is,” Bradshaw interrupted. “I give you my word, I don’t know. My wife had dinner with me to-night. Afterward she went upstairs. I was sitting here in the library, and one of the servants came in and told me to go to her at once. I found her just as you see her now.”

“Well, whatever it is,” the doctor replied sceptically, “the fact remains that the tragedy is still on her mind.

The Black Days

And as long as it is there, I can offer you little hope.”

He arose. “I will be in to-morrow. I have left orders for to-night. Everything that can be done will be done—you know that.”

When he had gone Elijah Bradshaw sat at his desk, his eyes gazing straight ahead of him, unseeing. Why should he feel guilty?—that was the thought that tortured him. His mind went to the Woman. Her presence in the house seemed to have made his conscience hypersensitive. Her manner was always accusing toward him. Her words had aroused in him a sense of blame for all that had happened to him. He could not understand it. He had never felt that way before. But how could he possibly be at fault in regard to this present awful catastrophe?

An hour later he went softly to his wife’s room. The light was very low, and the Woman sat at the edge of the bed.

“She is resting,” the Woman whispered. “The doctor left something to make her sleep.”

He looked at his wife without replying, and going to the window, sat down in the chair in which he had found her that evening. His eyes fell on the letter which lay at his feet, and something told him that here lay the explanation for his wife’s condition. He picked up the letter, almost afraid to touch it.

The Woman was watching him closely.

There was not enough light in the room for him to read by, and he took the paper downstairs into the library and read it.

“The curse!” he exclaimed aloud, like a man who has been victimised by black magic. “Good God!”

When he had partially recovered from the uncanny

The Eternal Magdalene

fear which gripped him, a terrible rage seized him—a rage directed at his children, at the son who had disgraced him, at the daughter who had run away.

In his grief and wrath he arose, and announced fervently to the empty room: "They shall never put foot in this house again. They shall go down to their graves unforgiven. To think that I should have brought into the world a thief and a strumpet! Henceforth, I have no children!"

He raised his right hand, as if pronouncing an oath.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GIRL WHO HAD BEEN PROTECTED

THE next morning Bellamy called at the house early. Otto hesitated before announcing him. Bradshaw had not left the library all night. He had sat at his desk, his head in his arms. The old servant had looked in on him several times, and finally, long past midnight, had entered quietly and turned out the lights. Bradshaw was still sitting at his desk when Bellamy arrived.

The young reporter seemed to understand the servant's hesitation.

"Tell him who it is, Otto," he said. "I'll only be a minute. If he doesn't want to see me, I'll go."

Otto went into the library.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, sir," he said, as the seated man moved and looked up inquiringly. "Some one wants to see you—Mr. Bellamy."

For a moment it appeared that Bradshaw had not understood the other's words. He shook himself a little and sat upright.

"Bellamy? Bellamy?" he repeated, as if trying to recall where he had heard the name before. "Oh, yes," he added, when his mind had been cleared of sleep. "He's a good boy. Let him come in."

The young man entered.

"Don't get up, Mr. Bradshaw," he said. "I merely want to inquire about Mrs. Bradshaw. . . . I met Dr.

The Eternal Magdalene

Stoner late last night, and he told me she was ill. I didn't want to say anything about it in the paper," he explained, "until I had seen you."

"Of course, of course," the man replied wearily. "You came to inquire about my wife."

He paused as if trying to collect his scattered thoughts.

"Yes, Bellamy," he went on, "she is very ill—a stroke of paralysis. It was very sudden. . . . That's all you need say in your paper."

"I'm very sorry, sir," Bellamy answered earnestly. "My deepest sympathies."

Another matter came into his mind.

"It will be very hard on your daughter," he remarked with deep sincerity.

"My daughter!" Bradshaw exclaimed fiercely. Then he uttered a hoarse laugh.

"I have no daughter!" he said.

"What do you mean?" gasped Bellamy. "Where is Elizabeth?"

Bradshaw suddenly thought of his position, of the scandal and disgrace which would attach to his name if it was learned of his daughter's action.

"I don't mean what I was saying," he apologised, sorry that he had spoken as he had. "I really meant nothing. I had a terrible night—I am all unstrung this morning."

Bellamy was not satisfied. He knew by the older man's words and look that something was wrong, that there was an attempt to hide something.

"Mr. Bradshaw," he said, approaching the other, "something has happened to Elizabeth, and I want to know what it is. You know I love her, and whatever you tell me will be a sacred confidence. . . . And if you

The Girl Who Had Been Protected

don't tell me, I shall make it my business to find out."

"No, no! You mustn't make inquiries," Bradshaw replied, frightened. "That wouldn't do."

"Then you must tell me at once."

The seated man looked at Bellamy. There was something in the younger man that inspired trust. Bradshaw was afraid, too, that the reporter would stir matters up unpleasantly, and that after his own inadvertent remarks the truth would come out. This, he had decided, must never happen. The outside world at least must remain in ignorance.

"I'll tell you on one condition, Bellamy," he announced, at length, "and that is that the matter does not go beyond you. Give me your word of honour."

The other gave it.

"Elizabeth has run away—she went yesterday afternoon. She went away with that rat, Macy. God knows where she is!"

He fumbled about his desk.

"Here's a letter she left. . . . It was this that caused her mother's illness."

Bellamy read the letter in silence. Then he reread it, to make sure that his first impression had not been some frightful mistake. His lips were compressed, and his hand involuntarily crumpled up the sheet of paper it held.

When he had regained his self-control he said in a serious, almost dictatorial voice: "You must let no one know of this. You must be careful. Her absence will create suspicion, but it must be explained away somehow—for the present. The papers would go crazy if they got a story like this. You must say that she has gone to visit relatives, on account of her mother's condition—or

The Eternal Magdalene

that you have sent her away to school. Tell them anything."

"No one will know unless you tell them," Bradshaw replied.

"I tell them!" The attitude of respect which Bellamy had always taken toward the older man now left him. "Do you think I am mad? I'd be the last to tell any one."

He thought a moment. Already his mind had gone to work on a plan of action.

"What time did she leave here?" he asked suddenly.

"I don't know," the man replied with bitterness. "And I don't care. She has gone—and she shall never come back."

"She went at four o'clock." It was the voice of the Woman who spoke. She had entered the room quietly and stood by the door.

"Four?" repeated Bellamy. "Of course. Just in time to catch the Limited for the East."

He started for the door.

"Advise your servants, Mr. Bradshaw," he said, looking at the Woman with suspicion. "Tell them where your daughter is visiting, lest they wag their tongues and create a scandal. I must be off."

He went out hurriedly.

For the first time in his acquaintance with Macy he had doubts as to the man's honesty. Nothing had ever arisen between the two which had involved a point of honour, and he had given little thought to Macy's character. But somehow the present matter filled him with grave doubts. He did not trust the other man, although he had no definite reason for his attitude. He had always liked Macy as a companion, but he suddenly realised that

The Girl Who Had Been Protected

there had never been any intimate interchange between them. Macy had been abroad for five years, and on his return the two young men had seen little of each other outside of casual meetings. Now his act filled Bellamy with hatred and disgust. It was underhand and deceitful, even if Macy intended the best by the girl. He had obviously taken advantage of her youth, of her innocence and faith.

Bellamy went directly to the station and made inquiries at the ticket office. At first the man whom he questioned was brusque and discourteous. But the reporter told him who he was. Bellamy's name was known to nearly every one in Edenburg who read the paper; and after his identity had been established he was treated with courtesy.

"It's hard to give you any definite information, Mr. Bellamy," the ticket agent told him. "There are many tickets sold for the Limited. . . . Just what do you want to get at?"

"Simply this," the young man replied eagerly. "I want to know if a pair of tickets were sold yesterday to any intermediate point between here and Albany. The Limited makes stops between here and there, doesn't it?"

"One or two," the other replied. "But most of the passengers from here go through to Albany. I'll see if I can help you out."

He opened a drawer and took out a manila envelope from which he withdrew a large pile of coupons. He looked them over carefully for nearly five minutes.

"There was only one ticket sold," he announced at length, "to an intermediate point yesterday, on the Limited. It's a special-fare train, otherwise I wouldn't know which tickets——"

The Eternal Magdalene

"Only a single ticket?" Bellamy asked, interrupting him.

"That's all."

Bellamy thanked him and went to the Pullman office. There he learned that one private compartment had been sold for Albany on the Limited, the day before.

Bellamy then returned to the *Star*. It was now obvious to him that Macy and the girl had gone to Albany. With this information in hand, he sat a long time at his desk, thinking deeply. His first impulse was to follow, but it suddenly occurred to him that he could do nothing if he found them, provided Macy had played fair and married her. This was by no means improbable, for Macy may have loved the girl, and she may have loved him. Legally she was of age; and even if she hadn't been, it would have to be her father who would take action.

But on the other hand, things might be different from what he hoped. He could not crowd the doubt from his mind that Macy might have tricked the girl into an elopement. Macy always seemed to have plenty of money. The girl's attractiveness might have led him into an unworthy and disgraceful act. That was the thing that worried Bellamy. And, if it proved true that Elizabeth had been deceived, then he himself could act. He could help her, provided he could reach her in time, for he believed that, if Macy's intentions had been dishonourable, he would not remain with her in America, but would take the first opportunity to go abroad.

His doubt was what decided him. He must take no chance. He went to Duncan Harrison.

"I want a vacation, Mr. Harrison," he announced abruptly.

Harrison wheeled round and looked at him in surprise.

The Girl Who Had Been Protected

"What the devil did you say?" he asked. "A vacation at this time of year! What's the idea?"

He knew that Bellamy did not merely want a pleasure vacation, and he sensed that something was wrong.

"The only idea is," the young reporter answered, "that I want a rest for a little while. I work hard——"

"Don't tell me what you've done!" Harrison cut in gruffly. . . . "But this isn't any time for vacations. Wait till next summer, and I'll give you a long one. You've got it coming to you then."

"I can't wait," Bellamy told him sharply. "I want it now—or I don't want it at all."

"Well, suppose I don't give it to you?"

"Then I'll quit," the other told him.

"The hell you'll quit!" Harrison roared. "Do you think I'm going to let you quit this paper after all these years I've trained you into the work? Not on your life!"

He smiled paternally.

"Take your vacation, and be damned."

"Thank you," Bellamy answered. "I won't be away long."

"How long?"

"Well, we'll say a week." Then Bellamy added: "Or, maybe a little longer."

"What's up your sleeve, my boy?" Harrison's tone expressed more than a mere business interest.

"I don't know yet," the other answered honestly.

"Oh, well, keep it to yourself. But before you go, I wish you'd——"

"Before I go," the reporter interrupted, "there's just enough time to catch my train."

"A hurry call, eh?" snorted the older man. "Well, good luck to you."

The Eternal Magdalene

"Say!" he called, when Bellamy was at the door; and his eyes twinkled wisely. "If you don't send me an invitation, you don't get a present."

After the other had gone Harrison wondered why his words seemed to have pained the other.

Bellamy went direct to the bank and withdrew what little money he had saved. Then he hurried home and packed a few things. He reached the station only a few minutes before the train left.

When he stepped off at Albany, late that afternoon, he realised the hopelessness of finding Macy and the girl. He had no clue to go on. He might make a canvass of the hotels, for even had Macy not registered in his own name, Bellamy knew his handwriting sufficiently well to have detected it. But this plan he dismissed. There were many hotels in Albany, and the task would consume too much time. Also, it was more than likely that Macy had not remained in Albany, but had gone direct to New York or Montreal for the purpose of sailing abroad. If indeed this had been the case, what little hope there was of intercepting him before he sailed would be gone.

Confronted with the outlook of failure, Bellamy again tried to reason with himself that Macy cared for Elizabeth and that she was safe in his hands. But he found little comfort in such reasoning. Though, for the moment, he had almost decided to return to Edenburg and to give up his difficult quest, he could not bring himself to turn back until he was sure that the girl he loved had come to no harm.

As he stood on the sidewalk in front of the station, deliberating what he should do, it occurred to him that he could find out fairly definitely about the girl's mar-

The Girl Who Had Been Protected

riage, although he might not be able to trace her and learn it from her own lips. He knew Macy had not married her in Edenburg. The man would not have dared do that, for it would have gotten into the papers through the license bureau. Another thing, between the time Elizabeth had left the house and the time when the Limited was due to go, there had been less than half an hour. They had arrived in Albany the previous night, too late to obtain a license, but had they remained there until the next day they might have been married that morning. If not, and they had gone directly to New York, in order to take their boat, then that city would be where the license had been issued.

Bellamy hurried to the Court House, arriving just before it closed. He went eagerly over the records of the day, hoping that he would find a sign of Macy's good faith. But it was not there. Then he went to the telegraph office and sent a message to an old newspaper man he knew on the *New York Times*, telling him Macy's name, and asking him to wire back immediately if there had been a marriage license issued that day.

While he was waiting for a reply he bought a paper and studied the list of sailings. A slow boat had left New York that day at noon, and another boat, even smaller and slower, was due to sail from the same city the next afternoon. He turned to the Montreal departures. There he discovered that one of the largest boats on the line between Montreal and Liverpool sailed early the following morning.

Bellamy pondered over the frugal facts at his disposal, weighing all their possibilities; but he knew he could arrive at no conclusion until he had heard from New York. If Macy had married the girl there, then they

The Eternal Magdalene

had probably already sailed, and there was nothing for him to do but to return. If, however, there was no record of their marriage, then it would seem that the man had taken her to Montreal with the intention of sailing on the following morning's boat. Even if this were the case, there was yet a chance that Macy had played fair, for he might have taken her to Montreal before their marriage, to escape the possibility of being followed by Elijah Bradshaw or his agents. And even had Macy not intended marrying the girl, it was more than likely he had gone to Montreal in order to escape from the country. However, Bellamy did not give up his hope that his friend in New York would send an affirmative answer.

Two hours later the telegram came. There had been no marriage license taken out in New York under the name of Macy. Bellamy was disappointed, but did not give up hope of the girl's safety. There was nothing more now for him to do in Albany. The one chance open to him was to hurry to Montreal, and try to reach there before the boat sailed. He felt convinced that Macy had gone there, no matter what his intentions.

He at once returned to the station. There was a midnight train for Montreal, and, if it was on time, it would put him in that city an hour before the boat was due to sail.

The hours dragged themselves out slowly until midnight. Bellamy walked about the bleak streets, trying to prepare himself to receive with equanimity the disappointment which might be awaiting him. There were many other possible courses which Macy might have taken, but Montreal was the most plausible one, and, in case the man was dishonourable, the safest. As Bellamy

The Girl Who Had Been Protected

thought of the girl his tenderness toward her grew. His protective instinct became emphasised to a degree which he had not formerly experienced. Primarily, he wanted her to be happy. That was the animating purpose of his mission. If he found that Macy's affection for her was genuine and that the girl reciprocated that love, he would have no word to say; and, under the circumstances, he secretly hoped that such would be the case, despite the fact that it would spell the greatest sorrow that had thus far come into his life.

He was too nervous and anxious to sleep on the train that night. He did not even take a berth, but sat in the smoking car, looking out into the blackness.

Shortly after the Canadian Customs Inspectors had passed through the car, the first glimmer of dawn showed above the horizon. He became more and more uneasy as he approached his destination. An official passed him, and he made inquiry as to whether or not the train was on time. He learned that they had lost over an hour during the night, but that there was a hope that some of the time would be made up before they reached Montreal. When Bellamy learned of the delay a black fear swept over him that, in case things were not as they should be, he might be too late.

The world outside grew lighter and lighter. Brown, barren fields stretched away into the low distances. A white mist hovered about the trees and the scattered houses. The cold, wind-swept landscape cast a spell of gloom over him, and he consulted his watch with something like terror.

"Are we making up time?" he asked another official.

"A little," came the other's indifferent answer.

The Eternal Magdalene

Two hours later they came into the outskirts of Montreal. The streets were narrow, the houses low and in a state of dilapidation. Save for the few people who were astir, these tottering houses and unkempt streets might have belonged to a deserted city. For half an hour the train passed slowly through the sordid suburbs, and then came to a standstill.

Bellamy started to leave the train, but an official told him that they were several miles from the station, and that they were waiting for another train to pull out. It was barely half an hour before the boat was due to leave, and he paced up and down in nervous alarm. He looked out of the windows for some kind of a public conveyance that might take him directly to the docks. He knew there was little hope of finding one in that section of the city. Only two lumbering carts appeared.

Twenty minutes went by before the train began to move again. He was too late now. The boat would be gone before he reached it. He felt utterly fatigued, broken and defeated. The strain of the day before, the long, hopeless hours of the night, the nervous tension he was under—all reacted on him suddenly. But he tried to encourage himself with the thought that, when at last he should arrive, he would discover a record of the girl's marriage.

When he stepped down from the train into the sprawling Grand Trunk Station, he decided to hurry to the dock anyway, on a chance that the boat had been delayed. But when he arrived he learned that it had been outward bound for nearly an hour. He attempted to get hold of a sailing list but was told he would have to go to the main offices of the Steamship Company when they opened

The Girl Who Had Been Protected

at nine o'clock that morning. It was already after eight now, and he took a fiacre to St. James Street to the address that had been given him. He was haggard and white and discouraged, and, as his finger ran down the booking register, it shook so violently that the clerk at the counter stopped work and gazed at him.

After a moment's search an inarticulate exclamation escaped his lips. He had discovered something which had not been in his calculation—he had found Macy's name registered alone. Feverishly he searched for that of the girl, but it was not there. Nor was there any other name of a single woman travelling alone. The list was small at that time of year. There were few bookings to Europe in the late fall, and, with two exceptions, all of the names were those of men. The two women registered were married and occupied staterooms with their husbands.

Bellamy walked out of the office in a daze. It was obvious that Macy had sailed without the girl. What could have become of her? What tragedy could have befallen her? Perhaps Macy had refused to marry her, and she, in turn, had refused to accompany him. This was the first thought that occurred to Bellamy as he stood on the narrow pavement, jostled by the hurrying pedestrians.

He turned suddenly back into the Steamship Company's office, and, with eager, trembling fingers, wrote Macy a wireless message:

"Inform me immediately where Elizabeth is or you will be arrested in Liverpool."

He signed the message "Elijah Bradshaw," giving the address of the Hotel Windsor, Montreal.

When he had deposited the message, he went to the

The Eternal Magdalene

hotel and waited. He knew that under the circumstances Macy would answer: he would have everything to gain and nothing to lose by so doing. And if the man thought that Bradshaw was in Montreal and had become cognisant of the desertion, he also would realise that it would be possible for him to be taken into custody when he landed.

A little after noon the answer came, stating that the girl was at the Place Viger Hotel.

Bellamy lost no time. Jumping into a carriage, he gave directions to the driver. It was a long ride from the Windsor to the Place Viger. The latter hotel, one of the largest in the city, was far over in the French quarter; and St. Catherine Street was busy and crowded, so that they made slow headway. Bellamy urged the driver on incessantly, but, despite his efforts, the trip seemed interminable. Finally they turned down a small street for a few blocks and skirted the little park which faces the hotel.

Bellamy paid the man liberally, and went in. The girl had not been registered in her own name, and he had difficulty in explaining to the clerk whom he wanted to see. At length, however, after much consultation and inquiries with the other men behind the desk, the clerk returned to him.

"You probably mean Mrs. Moore," he announced. "Her husband, I believe, sailed this morning. She herself left immediately after breakfast."

He looked into a little book on the desk.

"She didn't leave any forwarding address," he said. . . . "That's as much as I know."

Bellamy left the hotel in a state of bewildering disappointment. He crossed the street and sat down hope-

The Girl Who Had Been Protected

lessly on a bench in the little park. The air was cold and biting, and the chill wind rattled the dead leaves and sent them eddying about his feet. But he was oblivious to everything save the problem of finding the girl he had come for. She was somewhere in the city, alone and deserted. He knew she would not return to her home after her disgrace. He knew, too, that she would not even attempt to communicate with her father or with any one she knew. For the first time in his life he considered her critically, weighing the many points in her character, trying to determine what she would be most likely to do under the circumstances.

Bellamy at length reached the conclusion that, despite the cruelty of the situation, she would try to find something to do, some way to support herself, for by nature she was proud, and not the kind that would give in submissively to fate. From her many talks with him about the various phases of the newspaper business, he knew that she was familiar with the purpose of "want advertisements." Under the circumstances, he reasoned, it would be the most natural thing for her to do to search through the papers for some kind of employment. He did not fear that she would kill herself. She had too much fortitude; and she was too much in love with life; and he knew her too well even to consider that she would turn to anything else, or let herself be drawn into the pitfalls which lay in wait for her.

He determined on a course of action, and, driving over to St. Laurence Street, he rented a front parlour in one of the old residences which had been turned into a better-class boarding house. Then he went to every newspaper office in the city and, after much consideration and revision, inserted the following advertisement:

The Eternal Magdalene

“WANTED—A young girl about twenty, as a companion to a child. Must have had high-school education and been reared in gentle surroundings. No references will be required, for the girl’s breeding and education will speak for themselves. A pleasant home to the right applicant, who will be treated as one of the family. Preference will be given to a girl who, if she should fill all the requirements, would like to be adopted and cared for.”

He gave the address of the house where he had taken quarters.

Then he went to his room and waited.

CHAPTER XIV

A SINNER?

WHEN Macy and Elizabeth had arrived in Albany it was late at night. The man had left her in the ladies' waiting room at the station, telling her that he was going out to get a minister to marry them. He had been very gentle with her on the trip, and the secret doubts and suspicions which had kept her in a state of anxiety and fright were finally dissipated by the time they had reached Albany. The man's words about the minister gave her much comfort and peace, and she waited for him in almost happy serenity while he was away from her.

An hour later he returned and took her hand.

"It's all right, dear heart," he told her. "I've found one. I had to wake him up. He was irritable at first, and said we would have to wait till morning. But I finally persuaded him, and he will be ready for us by the time we get there."

He led her out to a closed carriage; and they drove for half an hour before they drew up before a little brick house.

They were met at the door by a man who was little older than Macy. He was very thin, and the yellow light in the dingy hallway accentuated the lines of dissipation on his face.

Macy presented him to the girl, and when he acknowl-

The Eternal Magdalene

edged the introduction, the thought came to her of how different he was from Dr. Smollet. But she felt very happy, and the unusualness of the man's appearance was at once forgotten.

It was a simple and brief ceremony, unlike the weddings the girl had seen at home. She regretted that hers could not be public, that there were no flowers, no music, no formality, and when, as they came out of the house together, she expressed her regret to Macy, he patted her gently on the arm and told her that when they were in England they would have a big wedding—the kind that she wanted, but that this was all they had time for now, and that she must be content for the present.

She was content in her heart, and said nothing more for a long time. They drove to a little station on State Street and waited for the electric car. At Ballston they changed to another trolley line. When they arrived at Saratoga it was nearly one o'clock in the morning, but the girl was not sleepy or tired. She was too happy and excited to be fatigued. The wonder of the adventure thrilled her. She felt that, at last, she had found the romance for which she had always waited and of which she had so fondly dreamed.

They went to a large, old-fashioned hotel with great white pillars and long stretches of verandas. It was surrounded by giant maple trees, and faced a roadway wider than any street the girl had seen in Edenburg.

Late the next morning they took a train for Montreal, arriving there in the bleak twilight. Macy had been very quiet on the trip, as if he had something on his mind which was troubling him.

"What's the matter, dear? Aren't you happy?" the girl asked. "You're as gloomy and cross as father."

A Sinner?

The man tried to comfort her and assure her that he was happy, but his words sounded only half-hearted.

Toward evening, after many attempts to draw him out of his mood, the girl lapsed into silence, unable to understand the change which had come over him. After dinner that night, at the Place Viger Hotel, she had wept a little, and Macy had spoken to her irritably. Somehow she was not so happy as she imagined she would be. But, when she thought of Europe and of the ocean voyage, she brightened.

"When does the boat go to-morrow?" she asked eagerly.

Macy had looked at her and hesitated before answering.

"About noon," he said. "There will be plenty of time."

She fell asleep dreaming of the wonders that awaited her on the morrow.

When she awoke in the morning she discovered, with no little alarm, that she was alone. She was frightened for a moment and worried, but in a moment she had dismissed her fear. Macy had probably gone out on some business—perhaps to arrange about their tickets. She smiled happily and waited. At nine o'clock, when he did not return, she dressed and went below. She would wait there for him. He would surely be back to have breakfast with her. But when at ten o'clock he did not come, she went to the desk and made enquiry as to what time he had gone out. He had told her that he was going to register under the name of Moore, so that, in case her father followed, they could not be found.

"Mr. Moore left about seven," the clerk told her. "He said he was sailing on the *Scotland*."

The Eternal Magdalene

A black mist passed before the girl's eyes. She felt herself swaying, and caught hold of the edge of the counter. In a moment she had summoned all her self-control.

"Thank you," she said, as if there had been nothing unusual in his words. Then she asked, with a supreme effort at indifference: "Is there another boat leaving to-day?"

"No, madam," the clerk replied politely. "There is not another one until day after to-morrow."

She thanked him again and walked blindly to her room.

She was too shocked to think rationally. Nor could she find any relief in tears. Hardly knowing what she was doing, she packed the few things she had with her and walked out of the hotel, avoiding the gaze of all she passed. She felt that her shame was written indelibly on her face, and that every one who saw her could recognise at a glance her tragic humiliation. Her only idea was to get away, to shake off the horror of that hotel.

She walked aimlessly through the park and entered a long, narrow winding street, whose stone houses, cold and severe, were built out flush with the sidewalk and shouldered each other closely, with rarely an intervening space. She did not take note of where she was going, nor of the people who passed her, but went on and on like an automaton.

Finally, after half an hour's dazed wandering, the hand-bag she carried began to grow heavy. She was conscious that her shoulders ached and that she was fatigued. She began to look about her. The houses on either side of the street were symbols of poverty.

A Sinner?

They were substantial houses, however, of the kind which shelter the middle lower classes in big cities. Some of the basements had been converted into little shops—grocery stores, carpenter work-rooms, cleaners' and dyers' establishments. In many of the windows were little white placards bearing the legend, "Chambre meublée à louer." The French attracted the girl's eye, and she stopped in front of one of the signs and looked at it curiously.

She was in the European quarter of Montreal, and the *affiches* seemed to taunt her with that which she had hoped for and lost. The irony of these signs whipped her into a realisation of her condition. The thought suddenly came to her that she must have a place to live. What better place than the one before which she now stood? It was far away from the busy thoroughfares, in the part of the city where no one would ever find her, where the people were not even her countrymen. She had a little money, and here she might hire a room in which she could collect herself and plan for the future.

She turned to the house nearest her, and struck the knocker.

A kindly and capable bourgeoisie in a cooking apron answered the door, and spoke to her in French. Elizabeth had studied a little French at school, but she could not understand the woman's rapid words.

"I—I don't speak French," she stammered. "Do you speak English?"

"I ought to," the woman returned quickly, smiling. "I have lived in this country for twenty years."

"I'm so glad!" the other said. "You see, I wanted to get a room."

The Eternal Magdalene

The woman led her in to a dark, musty hallway, and her manner was almost maternal when she said: "I have a very nice little room for you."

She looked at the girl sadly, as if she understood her affliction; but, without any further comment, mounted the narrow stairs, motioning the other to follow.

It took most of the girl's money to pay for her room and board in advance for the week, and when the woman saw how little she had left, she patted her on the shoulder with rough and primitive tenderness.

"Don't worry, *mon enfant*," she said, consolingly.

With that she left the room.

After an hour Elizabeth regained her mental equilibrium. She was able to look at the events of the last few days with a clear vision. The shock of the revelation of Macy's duplicity had passed, leaving her depressed and fatigued. Her infatuation for the man had entirely departed. Now she had only resentment and hate for him. So strong was this new emotion that she began to feel her own potentialities and initiative and action. All her life she had been pampered and subjugated, but she had always inwardly revolted against the restrictions which had been placed on her. She had the vitality of impetuous and daring youth; yet she had had no channels through which to express it. Now, unrestricted by any exterior influences, her nature asserted itself. Despite her tragic sorrow, there was a certain zest in her new independence; and she determined at once to meet the game that had been placed before her, and to play it with fortitude.

The woman brought her up a little breakfast, and it strengthened her. Shortly after, she went forth to seek employment. She knew how the girls applied for

A Sinner?

work in her father's store, and she went directly, after making enquiry, to two of the largest establishments in Montreal. At one they took her application and told her there was little chance of a position until the holiday season. At the other they held out more hope, telling her to call again in a fortnight. She was somewhat discouraged, for she had walked miles and felt exhausted. She turned again toward the street in which she lived, intending to rest the remainder of the day and to go forth again in the morning.

Passing a news-stand, she thought of Bellamy; and in that instant he seemed dearer to her than ever before. She bought several papers, intending to look through them in the hope that she would find some opening. When she was in her room again she read them carefully. There were several advertisements that attracted her attention, and before dinner that night she had answered them all. But to each place she went she was too late: the papers had been morning papers, and it was now late afternoon. She decided to arise early the next morning, so that she might have a better chance making her applications.

She went to bed early, but slept little. When the darkness enveloped her the horror of her situation came back to her afresh. She thought of her mother with great tenderness, and of the home which had been forever left behind. Her loneliness seemed more than she could bear.

In the morning, after many restless hours during which she had dozed-off occasionally through sheer physical fatigue, she arose at dawn. She went to the corner and bought all the newspapers. During the night it had grown colder. There was an unmistakable touch

The Eternal Magdalene

of the approaching winter in the air. It frightened her not a little when she thought of the severity of the northern colds, for she had brought with her no heavy suit.

When she re-entered her room the woman was there with a cup of steaming tea and two little croissants. She saw the papers under the girl's arm, and shook her head sadly.

"It's hard work finding anything to do this time of year," she said. "But don't you worry. Maybe my husband knows of something. I'll speak to him to-night when he comes home."

Elizabeth was confused and ashamed.

"Why don't you let your friends know?" the woman asked, after regarding Elizabeth closely.

The girl looked up at her, frightened.

"No! I can't do that," she said, impulsively.

"Then you have friends, haven't you? I thought so the moment I saw you. Well, maybe you'll change your mind. . . . Come, tell me all about it, and we'll see what can be done."

"Nothing can be done," Elizabeth protested. "I've got to get some kind of work. . . . And I'll get it, too!"

The woman did not press her. She merely patted the girl on the shoulder and shook her head knowingly. Then she went out.

Elizabeth did not wait to drink her tea before she opened the papers and began to read the advertisements.

An hour later, with high hopes in her heart, and on her face something which resembled a smile, she walked out into the wintry air. In her hand was a little clipping she had cut from one of the papers. At the corner was a police officer, of whom she enquired the way to

A Sinner?

St. Lawrence Street. He pointed the direction brusquely, and she hurried on, forgetting to thank him.

When at last she came to the turning, her heart was beating fast, and her lips trembled with excitement. Maybe she would be too late! Maybe they would ask her questions about herself and her life; and she would not know what to say. The hope held out to her by the clipping seemed impossible of fulfilment. She looked at the numbers of the houses and then again at the advertisement. She was a long way from her destination, and she quickened her steps, fighting against the sharp wind which blew in her face.

After nearly a half-hour's walk she came to a standstill, in order to collect her thoughts and regain her breath. The house to which she was going was in the next block, and she wanted to be calm and collected when she entered. Suppose this quest should prove futile—that was a possibility which frightened her. After tarrying a few moments she went on slowly, scrutinising each number she passed. When she came to the place which might mean everything to her, she hesitated. A wave of faintness passed over her, and she was almost afraid to enter.

As she stood there, her hands clasped tightly, her breath coming and going in little quick gasps, the front door opened and a young man rushed down the steps, bare-headed, and came up to her.

So suddenly had it all happened that the girl's mind could not immediately grasp the apparent miracle of what she saw. But when she felt his arms around her and looked up into his strained, happy face, she sensed the reality of it all. Her heart seemed to stop beating. Her knees grew weak, and only with difficulty

The Eternal Magdalene

could she stand. In another instant she was sobbing almost hysterically.

Bellamy led her into the house tenderly and without a word. He placed her in a big chair and knelt down at her side. Her happiness had been so sudden and overpowering that she had forgotten her shame. Now it came back to her, and she covered her face with her hands.

"There, there, dear child!" the man's voice was saying. "Thank God, I have found you! There's nothing to cry about any more."

She could not bring herself to look at him.

"You mustn't be ashamed for what you have done," he went on tenderly. "All will be forgotten. The minute I found that you had gone, I came after you. I couldn't let you go without knowing that you were safe and happy. . . . I would have stayed here in Montreal the rest of my life—until I found you."

Still she could not speak, or look at him. She only knew that she loved him, that she had always loved him from her early girlhood. And that very love, because of the memory of the past days, made her draw away from him.

Bellamy mistook her attitude. He had never hoped that she loved him as he did her, and when she had gone away with Macy he felt that for years he had nourished a vain hope.

"You needn't be afraid of me," he said. "I shall ask nothing of you. I only want to help you. I want you to know that I understand, and forgive you, too. I knew you would never come back, or let your people know what had happened. And I knew you would be alone here—and I was afraid for you."

A Sinner?

"I am so ashamed of myself," the girl sobbed.

"You mustn't be ashamed, child," he told her. "You're so young—and you are not to blame for what you have done."

The girl did not think of her guilt other than that in deserting her mother and father. Her humiliation at being duped was what had hurt her the most. Bellamy's words gave her comfort.

"I did wrong in leaving my home," she said, with all the bitterness of contrition. "But I knew they would never let me marry him if I told them—and I was so lonely and unhappy. I thought I loved him," she went on, brokenly, "and that he loved me. That wasn't wrong, was it?"

Bellamy was a little startled by her words.

"There is nothing wrong in love," he said reprovingly, "but it was wrong to go with him without marrying him."

"I did marry him!" the girl exclaimed. Bellamy's remark had hurt her deeply.

"You married him!" Bellamy stood up and looked at her in amazement. "Where did you marry him?"

"Why, in Albany," the girl replied, angered and grieved at the man's doubts. "We were married that same night. Do you think I would have gone with him if he hadn't married me?"

Bellamy was too surprised to speak for a minute. Could it be that Macy had taken out a license before he had asked the girl to go with him? Could he himself have overlooked the name on the records? . . . Then the terrible suspicion came to him that Macy had tricked her by a false marriage.

He looked down at her pityingly.

The Eternal Magdalene

"Tell me all about it, Bess," he asked, "and we'll see what can be done."

"I'll tell you everything, Jack," she answered, after a moment, looking away from him. "Only—only you must tell me that I didn't do wrong."

"I can tell you that now," the man replied tenderly. "You did nothing wrong. You might have been a little foolish, but that was all."

He sat down opposite her and took her hand in his.

"I thought I loved him," the girl began. "He was so gentle, and he told me he loved me. I thought he meant it. He told me stories about Paris and said he would take me there if I would come away with him. He told me to leave a note for my mother, so that no one could find us until we were safely away. Then—then we came here—and yesterday early we were to sail."

She stifled a sob as she thought of her awakening the preceding morning.

"In Albany we went to the minister's and were married."

"Where in Albany did you go?" Bellamy put in.

"Why, I—don't know. We drove there in a carriage——"

The man compressed his lips tightly, and then asked: "Who saw your marriage? . . . Tell me all about it."

"No one," the girl answered sorrowfully. "We and the minister were all. It was over in a very few minutes, and then we left for Saratoga——"

"Wait a moment," Bellamy interrupted. "Did you sign anything at the—minister's?"

"Why, no," the girl answered, puzzled. "Why should I sign anything?"

A Sinner?

"It's customary—sometimes," he answered.

The girl looked up at him, frightened.

"Why do you ask me these questions? Is there anything wrong? Wasn't our marriage all right?"

Bellamy pressed her hand.

"Of course—of course." He could not bear to tell her that her marriage had been a farce, that the man who married them was an accomplice of Macy's. He saw that the girl had entered into it in good faith, and that she believed Macy.

"You see," he explained, "marriages differ. I just wanted to know what kind of a marriage yours was."

"He told me that when we got to London he would have a big wedding with music and flowers. . . . I believed him." She began to cry again.

"Of course, you believed him, child. What else could you do?"

"He was so kind," the girl repeated. "And I was so happy."

"What happened after your marriage?" the man asked softly.

"We went to Saratoga," the girl went on. "We stayed there till the next day. Then we came here and went to a hotel. He told me the boat would leave the next day at noon. When I woke up yesterday morning he was gone. But I thought he would come back—I thought he loved me." She was speaking with difficulty, trying to stifle her sobs. "Then—I found out that he had gone—that he had gone on the boat, and that there was no other boat. . . . He had deserted me——"

She could speak no more. Her shoulders moved convulsively. She struggled a moment, but her self-control

The Eternal Magdalene

went. Bellamy put his arms around her, and she lay close to him, weeping like a little child.

"I didn't do wrong—did I?" she wailed. "Tell me I didn't do wrong!"

Bellamy's eyes were moist. He did everything he could to comfort her. He told her that she was good, that whatever she did was right—that it could not be otherwise.

"But what—am I to do—now?" she asked at length.

"You're going back home with me," the man told her firmly.

"I can't go back," she sobbed. "You know I can't go back. Father would never speak to me again. I would only disgrace him if they found out in Edenburg what I have done. I couldn't face it."

"He'll forgive you, just as I forgive you," the man consoled her. "And no one will ever know why you went away. No one knows it now. . . . You must come back."

"Do *you* want me to come back?" she asked, without looking up.

"If you don't come back," Bellamy said, "then I shall remain here. I shall always stay near you. Nothing else matters—but your happiness."

The girl now turned to him.

"How can you care—now?" she asked unbelievably. "After what I've done—after my marriage, and all——"

"I care more than ever, dear," the man said earnestly. "Don't you see?—you need me now. I never thought the day would come when you would really need me. And I never knew that I could love you so much."

"You still love me?" she asked. She thought of her marriage, and a new grief came to her. She had not

A Sinner?

cared on his account before. Now her love for him seemed to her the dominant note of tragedy in the whole episode.

"I love you more than I have ever loved you before," he told her. "And it makes no difference whether you love me or not—I shall always stay by you and help you when I can."

"But I do love you," the girl answered. "I have always loved you, I think. But I never really knew it—until—— Oh! it was you I loved when I went away. I have been such a child. I didn't know how much you meant to me. Now—when it's too late—I realise it."

"It's not too late, dear heart," the man breathed, gathering her close to him. "It's not too late."

"But I—I am his wife." At the sudden memory of this, she drew away out of the man's arms.

"But that means nothing," Bellamy said, his heart full of happiness at the girl's confession. "Such a marriage doesn't bind you."

He looked at her incredulous face.

"When we go back to Albany," he added, "we can have it annulled. I know just what to do. It will be wiped out as if it had never taken place and then——"

The girl hid her face in her hands.

"Oh, I understand—I understand!" she cried bitterly. "It was no marriage, was it? You're trying to keep that from me. And all your questions! He tricked me into thinking it was a marriage, and the minister wasn't a minister at all—— Oh, tell me the truth!"

Bellamy struggled hard with himself for a moment. But when he took the girl's hands from her face and

The Eternal Magdalene

looked into her eyes, he knew that deception would be futile.

"It was all a despicable ruse," he confessed softly.

She shuddered and became hysterical.

"Oh, the shame of it! To think he would do that! To think that I trusted him! . . . What have I done—what have I done?"

"What every other sweet, loving child in the world would have done," the man answered. "You believed in him, and you thought you were married to him."

"What shall I do now? . . . I can never look you in the face again after this," she moaned, between her sobbing.

"But if I forgive you," the man protested eagerly, "surely you can forgive yourself. You acted in good faith. You thought you were married—and that was the thing that counted. It wasn't as if you had deliberately done wrong."

She did not answer for a long time. Then she drew close to the man and put her head on his breast.

"You are so good," she said in a whisper, "and I love you—oh, how I love you!"

For a long time he held her, his lips on her hair. They were oblivious of the passage of time. For them the world seemed to have stood still.

The man's voice broke the silence.

"You are going back with me," he told her, and in his tone there was something which she could not disobey. "I shall take you to my aunt's first. Then I shall go to your father. I will make him understand—and he too will forgive you."

CHAPTER XV

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

THE next morning they arrived in Edenburg. Little had been said on the journey. The girl had been sorrowful and apprehensive as to what would befall when they arrived; and Bellamy respected her silence, doing all he could to make it comfortable for her. In Edenburg he took her directly to his old aunt, with whom he lived. Then he went to the Bradshaw home.

The Woman met him at the door.

"You have found her?" she asked anxiously.

Bellamy looked at her with suspicion.

"What do you mean?"

The Woman smiled sadly.

"I know the truth," she said. "I knew it before you did. She went away with Macy. She thought she loved him, and he deceived her. It was not her fault—she was a good girl. . . . You have nothing to fear from me," she went on. "I loved her—like a mother. I have waited anxiously for you to come back. I prayed that you would find her safe, that you would be good to her."

Bellamy could not doubt the Woman's sincerity. He knew that she was telling him the truth. He could deduce from her voice that it was her heart which spoke; and, when he answered her, all suspicion had gone from him.

"Yes, I have found her," he said. "She was in Mon-

The Eternal Magdalene

treal. Macy had deserted her; he had led her into a fake marriage. She is at my house now. That's why I'm here—I want to see her father, and find out if he won't take her back."

"Pray God that he will!" murmured the Woman, as she led him into the library.

A moment later Elijah Bradshaw entered. He presented a different appearance from that of a week ago. He looked older; the lines in his face seemed deeper. His resolute self-confidence had gone.

"Well, Bellamy, my boy?" he asked as the younger man entered. His voice echoed despondency and discouragement.

"I think I've got some good news for you," Bellamy said.

Bradshaw laughed bitterly.

"Good news? Is there such a thing in the world?"

"I have found your daughter," the other told him.

"My daughter! Which daughter?" Then Bradshaw corrected himself. "I have no daughter."

"Your daughter Bess." Bellamy attempted to be calm.

"I told you I have no daughter," the other man replied irritably.

The reporter ignored this remark.

"I have found Bess. I got trace of Macy. He deserted her in Montreal."

Bradshaw turned, his face livid.

"Montreal!" he cried hoarsely. "Great God! The sins of the fathers!"

"She was not with him when I found her," Bellamy went on. "I found her in a little boarding-house—alone. I brought her back. She is coming here——"

Bradshaw struck the table with his fist. He had re-

The Prodigal Daughter

covered himself. Once more he was bitter and adamant.

"She is *not* coming here!" he cried angrily. "She shall never come into this house again!"

"Do you mean that?" asked the other.

"Mean it! Of course, I mean it." Bradshaw's face was purple with rage. "Do you think I would take her back after what she's done? Don't you know that she's wrecked her mother's life, and made an invalid of her?"

"I wouldn't say that, if I were you," Bellamy warned him.

"Why shouldn't I say it?" growled Bradshaw. "She did it—I tell you she did it as surely as if she had stabbed her with a knife."

Bellamy shook his head.

"I am sorry. I thought you would be glad to know that Bess was safe; that she was coming back to you."

"I am glad that she's alive, I suppose," Bradshaw said, involuntarily. "But that is all."

"And you will not forgive her?" the younger man asked. "Not when you know that she was tricked, that it wasn't her fault altogether?"

"No, I'll never forgive her."

"Your mind's made up?" persisted Bellamy.

"My mind is made up," Bradshaw answered, uncompromisingly. "Tell her not to come here."

"I'll not do that, Mr. Bradshaw," the other answered firmly. "She has a right to come here. If you send her away again, that will be on your own conscience. And if you do send her away, then I'll take her to my aunt's. She'll have a home there, and she'll be cared for."

The Eternal Magdalene

The older man looked up in surprise.

"After what she's done, would you take her in? Do you mean to say that you still care for her?"

Bellamy came closer to the man, and looked him straight in the eyes. Then he said, with marked earnestness: "Mr. Bradshaw, I believe that a girl that's made one mistake is still good enough for any fellow. If she hasn't, she's too good for him."

Bradshaw said nothing for a moment. "Oh, very well," he remarked, at length. "Do what you please."

"The day will come, Mr. Bradshaw, when you will be very sorry for this decision," the reporter said, as he went toward the door.

"I want no advice from you," the other returned sharply.

Then a change came over his manner.

"Bellamy," he called, "don't you see how impossible it would be for her to stay here after what she has done? How could I be kind to her, knowing, as I do, the affliction she has brought on her mother? . . . But I'm glad you feel the way you do about her. I hope you will take good care of her. If you need any help——"

The front door bell rang viciously.

The Woman crossed the hallway.

"It's Judge Bascomb to see you," she announced.

Bradshaw arose and crossed to the door which led into the drawing-room.

"That tiresome old fool! . . . Tell him I'm not in—tell him I'm sick. Tell him anything." He turned to Bellamy. "I don't want to offend him, but you see him for me, will you?"

The young man nodded as Bradshaw disappeared.

The Prodigal Daughter

The Judge entered hurriedly, stamping angrily with each step. He was in a rage.

"Where's Bradshaw?" he demanded. "I want to see him at once."

Bellamy regarded him cynically.

"Mr. Bradshaw's ill," he said pleasantly, "and he can't see anybody."

"He'll have to see me—if he knows what's good for him." The Judge stamped up and down the room.

Bellamy seated himself and lighted a cigarette, with annoying nonchalance.

"What is it, Judge? Anything wrong?"

The other man drew up to a sudden halt in front of him.

"Wrong! Oh, no, nothing's wrong! Nothing at all," he stormed. "Only a lot of these women Bradshaw has driven out of the Tenderloin have settled in a big house right next to my terraces on Livingston Avenue, and all my tenants are getting ready to move out. . . . Hell, no! Nothing's the matter!"

At this Bellamy threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"Funny, ain't it, you young ruffian? Say, look here," he announced, ignoring the other's mirth. "I've got to see Bradshaw. Tell him I want to see him. I don't care if he's dying."

Bellamy only continued to laugh. He was enjoying the situation immensely.

"What do you expect Mr. Bradshaw's going to do about it?" he asked. "What you want is a man who can move houses. Why not put your terraces down in the Tenderloin? All the women have left there."

Bascomb ignored the other's taunts.

The Eternal Magdalene

"Bradshaw had better do something about it," he said, "and do it pretty quick. He stirred up this mess, and he's the man I'm going to hold responsible."

"Where do you want these women to go, Judge?" the reporter asked him.

"I don't care a tinker's dam where they go," the other roared, "so long as they don't come alongside of my property."

Bellamy sobered and turned round in his chair, so that he could face the other man.

"Judge," he said, "you're getting pretty particular all of a sudden. If I remember rightly, you owned a couple of houses in the old segregated district, and you didn't have any objection to renting them to these women at about four times what you could get from anybody else. I've got all the dope on it down at the office, and it may be that I'll find space to run it one of these cold autumn days."

"Your threat doesn't worry me," Bascomb replied, irritably. "I know how to keep things out of the newspapers. Anyway, I came here to talk to Bradshaw, not to be cross-examined by a whipper-snapper like you."

"Don't get sore," Bellamy chided him, with easy good nature. "As Socrates says, 'Things are not always as bad as they seem.' . . . Come, what kind of a place have they started over on Livingston?"

"Don't know what they call it." The Judge sat down, tattooing nervously on his knees. "All I know is, I want it closed up. . . . A lot of young girls running in there at all hours—taxicabs dropping men off a block or two away, so as not to excite suspicion. Suspicion—humph!"

"That's a call-house," explained Bellamy. "Scores of

The Prodigal Daughter

them have sprung up in town lately. Apartment houses are full of them."

"A call-house?" the Judge asked, with interest. "What's that?"

"Well, I'll tell you," Bellamy said. "The woman who runs it has a list of telephone numbers. The girls give them to her so that she can call them up if they are wanted. Many of the girls work in stores, and don't earn enough to live on. A swell place of that kind in Milwaukee was pinched a while ago, and some scandal sheet got hold of the woman's telephone list and published it—names, numbers and all. Say! It pretty nearly disrupted the town. That list was so long it looked like a young directory. And some of the names on it—zowie!"

"Oh, so that's it!" muttered the other.

"That's only one way," added Bellamy. "There's lots of others."

Judge Bascomb thought a moment. Then, as if remembering something, he sprang to his feet.

"Well, if Bradshaw is going to side-step this matter," he announced, "I'll see the Chief of Police."

"That's a good idea," the reporter answered, ironically. "Tell your troubles to a copper!"

The Judge went out without replying, slamming the door after him.

Bellamy waited a moment, then he, too, went, going straight to Elizabeth.

"Your father is in a bitter and unforgiving mood, dear," he told her. "But I can't believe he's altogether sincere in it."

He hesitated. Sooner or later the girl must know about her mother's condition; and Bellamy believed it

The Eternal Magdalene

would be better if he told her now, so that she would be prepared when she returned to her home.

He came near to the girl, and put his hand on hers.

"Bess," he began, "you've got to know something—something that will hurt you; but you must be brave about it. . . . Your mother has had a breakdown."

"My mother?"

The girl's grief was quick and overpowering. She no longer thought of herself and her own tragedy. She was all love for her mother.

"Is it anything very serious?" she asked, frightened. "Tell me, Jack—I can bear it."

"It may not be serious," the man answered.

"When did it happen—what was the cause of it?"

Elizabeth had a premonition that she was to blame, that it was her act which had affected her mother.

"It happened the day you went away."

"Then I was to blame, wasn't I? It was my note, my leaving that did it. . . . Oh, my poor, dear mother!"

"That's the reason your father is so bitter toward you," Bellamy explained tenderly. "But, when he sees you, I think he will soften. He loves you—I know that. He offered, through me, to help you. . . . He will be downtown at the office, probably all day to-day; but I want you to go back home this afternoon. I want you to be there when he arrives."

"How can I face him—after what I have done?" the girl sobbed. "And my mother——"

"You mustn't think of it like that," the man told her. "You must go back and be brave. And if your father is hard and doesn't relent, you are to come back here—at once. This will be your home. You will always be cared for. My aunt will look after you."

The Prodigal Daughter

"But I want to go to my mother now," begged the girl. "I want to ask her forgiveness. I want to tell her how sorry I am."

Bellamy could not bear to tell her of her mother's inability to speak or move, and of the extreme danger of another shock. But he saw it would be necessary to do so in order to keep the girl away until her homecoming could be prepared for. So he told her as best he could, trying to make it as easy for her as possible.

She understood, but did not answer.

Bellamy then went down to his office.

"Back already, are you?" Harrison greeted him, good-naturedly. Then he looked at his reporter's haggard face. "You don't look as if you'd had much of a rest."

"I didn't," Bellamy told him. "I didn't go for a rest either. But I accomplished what I set out for. Don't question me. Maybe I'll tell you more about it some day. . . . And now I'm ready for work again."

Harrison chose to ignore the mystery in the young man's words. He could see that the other was under a severe strain, and assumed a matter-of-fact air.

"The paper has missed you a lot these days," he remarked. "Things have been happening fast since you went away. The situation here is getting interesting. God knows how it'll all turn out. This town is a shambles."

"What's happened?" Bellamy asked.

"Well, to begin with, we've had raids every night," Harrison answered, with no attempt to conceal his disgust. "Hundreds of women have been turned loose on the town. The whole city is a big brothel now. The women are in the hotels and the apartment houses

The Eternal Magdalene

—they've even scattered through the residential sections. They're getting beyond the power of the police. The Chief is working hard, but it would take a young army to handle the situation. Everybody is kicking, except the reformers. You meet the women in the restaurants, at the theatres, in the parks—everywhere you go. I worry every time my wife and daughter go out. . . . And the complaints! People are howling on all sides. There's a constant stream of good citizens pouring into the police station, raising hell about the fact that their neighbourhoods are being invaded and that nobody is safe."

Bellamy laughed a little.

"I was just up at Bradshaw's," he put in, "and old Judge Bascomb came in, hot under the collar and fuming. He said he held Bradshaw responsible because some of the women had moved in next to his terraces, and his tenants were getting ready to move out. The old hypocrite! It did me a lot of good to hear him carry on. I warned him a week ago what would happen; but it never occurred to him that he himself might get it in the neck."

"For two days," Harrison caught him up, "he has been bothering the old Chief, cursing and ranting around. He's even been in here to see me. It's a shame to have those nice terraces ruined, but what can be done? You know how hard it is to get evidence on a call-house. If the one next to him was the only establishment of its kind, it could be watched and nabbed. But he's only one of the many property-holders who are demanding action."

"It serves him right!" Bellamy commented, without sympathy. "He's an old rake himself. He merely went

The Prodigal Daughter

into this crusade because he thought it would help him. He'll be the leader of the opposition here in a short time, and then there will be a mess."

"Old man Barnes, too," supplied the other, "is up in arms because his hotel clerks can't tell these women from respectable guests. Jennings and Stillman, too, are raising particular hell—and all three of them are members of the Citizens' Committee. They helped sow Gleason's wind, and now they are reaping the cyclone. I told them candidly they themselves were to blame, but they can't see it. They're as hot for reform as ever, and are railing at the police. . . . Why, do you know," Harrison went on, "that there are suspicions about the tenants who have moved into the big house next to the Girls' Collegiate School!"

"There'll be something doing soon, believe me!" Bellamy commented. "There'll be a reaction against this whole crusade, just as there has been in every other city where Gleason's methods have been carried out."

"Well, our little game," smiled Harrison, "is to sit tight, and follow the crowd. But," he added meditatively, "if I was a millionaire and didn't give a damn about the future of this paper, I'd print some stuff that would make them sit up and take notice."

Bellamy did not answer, and the other grinned.

"I hear no objections from my young moral friend," he chuckled. "You've learned a couple of lessons yourself, haven't you, my boy?"

"I've got nothing to say now," Bellamy answered, resignedly.

He went out to his desk and sat down to think things over. He looked carefully through the papers which had appeared since his absence. Despite the conserva-

The Eternal Magdalene

tism of the editorial policy, he could read undeniable evidence of the crusade's fell results. The meetings at the Tabernacle had declined. There were anonymous letters in the "From Our Readers" department, condemning the new conditions. One minister had preached a sermon against the inefficiency of the police. It was a subtle rebuke for Gleason, for any sane man knew that the police were inadequate to cope with every phase of the vice which had now been scattered all over the city. The Mayor, taking strength from the general dissatisfaction of the property owners, had modified his tactics, and was on the verge of coming out squarely and openly against the campaign. But the reformers were still pushing ahead, maintaining that things would adjust themselves, that right would be sure to triumph in the end, that the powers of darkness should not be met with compromise.

The one fact that stood out from all the reports was that the women were not leaving the city, but were insinuating themselves into every phase of its life and into every district. They were getting beyond control, for they were practising under cover.

Bellamy smiled cynically, and began to plan for his next day's story. Now that he had returned, the burden of the campaign's publicity had fallen again on his shoulders.

After a few minutes he went to the City Editor to obtain a copy of Gleason's sermon of the night before, hoping to find therein something which would give him an idea for his "feature." The subject of the sermon was "Back-sliding into Hell." It was one of those personal exhortations for which Gleason was notorious, and it carried insinuations concerning prominent men

The Prodigal Daughter

of Edenburg. It was a crude attempt to frighten many of the prominent local merchants into stepping in line with the crusade.

Bellamy read it with a weary smile until he came to the passage: "And there is among us an arch back-slider—a hypocrite of the deepest dye. Although he has shelled out for the cause of righteousness and more than once swung his arm to upper-cut the devil, he yet is guilty of a crime so unthinkable that I wouldn't believe it until I had the goods on him personally. This whited sepulchre has taken into his home a woman of the streets, and is harbouring her."

According to the newspaper account, Gleason had, at this point in his sermon, dropped on his knees and offered up a prayer for the soul of the accused.

Bellamy whistled softly and went to Harrison.

"Here's a hot one," he said, pointing to the passage he had just read. "Is this buncombe, or has Gleason got any facts? If he has, there might be a good story in it."

"I don't know what there is to it," Harrison replied. "Several people have spoken to me about it. There's a rumour around that Gleason was referring to Bradshaw."

"Bradshaw!"

"It's only a rumour," Harrison explained, noting the young man's shocked expression. "The story was probably started by some of the City Hall crowd that's got it in for Bradshaw. Personally, I don't think Gleason was referring to anybody. . . . In any event, even if such a thing were possible in the case of Bradshaw, Gleason wouldn't open his mouth. He knows which side his bread is buttered on."

The Eternal Magdalene

"Anyway, I'm going around to see Gleason this afternoon," Bellamy answered angrily. "This sort of rough stuff is going a little too far. I'm going to ask him a few questions."

Gleason was not in his office when Bellamy called, and the young man went home, leaving word that he would return to see the evangelist later in the afternoon.

"Bess, I want you to go to your father," he told the girl. "I want you to go back and ask his forgiveness. I just called up the store, and they told me he had left for home. If—if things are not all right, you must give me your promise to come back here."

The girl gave her promise, and Bellamy walked with her to the car.

When she came within sight of her own house, she was frightened and wanted to turn back; but she thought of her mother and of Bellamy's words, and she stepped upon the front porch, her head bowed with shame. She started to ring the bell, but was afraid. Withdrawing her hand, she tried the knob. The door was unlocked, and she stepped quietly and tentatively into the hallway. She looked into the living-room, but there was no one there. A great weakness overpowered her, and she sat down in a chair near the door, covering her face with her hands.

Some one touched her gently on the shoulder, and she looked up, startled.

The Woman stood by her.

"Where's my father?" the girl asked, frightened.

"He's in the library," the Woman said. "I shall call him."

Elizabeth put out her hand to restrain her.

The Prodigal Daughter

"No—not yet."

The Woman looked at her with pity.

"You're tired," she said tenderly. "Hadn't you better come to your room and rest before you see him?"

The girl stood up with resolution, and reached for her hand-bag.

"No! I mustn't see him!" she said, with repressed excitement. "I can't face him! I thought I could—but I can't. I can't face any one. . . . I must go—I must go!"

She looked about her wildly, and started to the door.

The Woman put out both her arms.

"Wait a little," she begged. "You're home now, don't you see—home. Your father will be so glad! We'll go to your own room, and you'll change your things and rest. . . . Then everything will be all right. Come."

"I can't—I can't! I must go!" the girl wailed, in broken whispers.

But the Woman would not release her.

"Your father is alone now. Your brother is not here, and your mother is silent and helpless. You are the only one he has. Do you think it would be fair to him if you should go away now? . . . And your mother—I think if she knew you were back, she would get better. It's the worry that keeps her the way she is."

At the mention of her mother, Elizabeth sank back into the chair and began to weep quietly.

"When did she—when did it happen? Does she still love me? . . . Do you think she could forgive me?"

"She has already forgiven you," the Woman replied. "I have been with her every minute during these last days."

"If she had only known that I was not altogether

The Eternal Magdalene

bad," sobbed the girl. "I thought I was married to him—I believed and trusted him."

"She knows all that," the Woman answered.

"You told her?" Elizabeth asked, wonderingly. "But you didn't know?"

"Yes, my child, I knew," said the other.

"And you told her that I had been tricked and deserted?" the girl asked, incredulously. "You told her that I had not intended to be bad, and that I have paid? Oh, how I have paid! You told my mother all? . . . How did you know?"

"I told her all," the Woman answered. "And I asked her to move her hand if she forgave you." There were tears in the Woman's eyes. "It was an effort for your mother to move, for she is paralysed. But she did move her hand, and a different look came into her face. So I knew that she forgave you."

Elizabeth stifled a great sob.

"You will stay now, won't you?" implored the Woman, holding out her arms entreatingly. "There is nothing to fear. Your father is much changed. He needs you. . . . Come, you will stay?"

The girl arose slowly and moved toward the Woman, as if in a daze.

"You are a servant—in my father's house," she said, in an awed voice, "and yet, when you spoke just now, it seemed to me I heard my mother's voice, and it was she who said, 'Come, you will stay.'"

"And you will stay?"

"Yes—if you think it best. Something tells me I must do as you say now, because——"

She broke down, and walked into the waiting arms of the Woman.

The Prodigal Daughter

"Because I understand," the other finished, drawing the weakening girl to her breast.

When they had reached the head of the stairs, the girl said: "I want to see my mother. I can't wait."

The Woman hesitated, and then said, as if to herself: "Perhaps, after all, it is best."

Together they entered the room where Martha Bradshaw lay. The girl rushed to the bed and knelt down. The Woman turned her head away.

"Oh, dearest, dearest! I am so unhappy!" the girl sobbed. "Try to forgive me—try to forgive me. I didn't know——" she ran on, incoherently.

A convulsive movement shook Martha Bradshaw's frame. A strange light showed in her eyes. Her lips moved, and slowly her fingers relaxed. She raised her hand and placed it on the head of her daughter.

"My little girl!"

The Woman started, and turned about joyfully.

"Those are the first words your mother has spoken since she read your note!" she exclaimed. "The doctor said——"

"I heard what the doctor said," Martha Bradshaw spoke again. "And he was right. My little child is back, and a great peace and relaxation have come over me. I can speak and move my arms——"

She sank back, as if the effort had exhausted her, and closed her eyes.

The Woman leaned over her and listened.

"Your mother is sleeping," she whispered to the girl. "Come, we will go to your own room. She will be better when she awakens. It was you she needed all the time in order to get well."

CHAPTER XVI

THE REFORM BOOMERANG

THAT afternoon Bellamy returned to Gleason's office. The evangelist was still away, but the reporter waited. When the man came in, he greeted Bellamy pleasantly.

"Say, son!" he exclaimed. "To-night we start the ninth inning; and in another week or two we'll win the game, hands down. This bush-league town hasn't got a look-in. . . . Come into the other room, and I'll hand you some hot dope for your Sunday story."

Bellamy was not pleased with Gleason's good nature. The resentment he had always felt toward the evangelist was now, for some reason he could not explain, greater than ever before. He disliked the cowardly manner in which Gleason had attacked the men of Edenburg in his sermon of the previous night, and he resolved to put some pointed questions to the reformer. He believed that Harrison's frame of mind was such that the wily newspaper proprietor might be induced to open the *Star's* columns to a little anti-reform material.

The citizens of Edenburg had already begun to react against the effects of the campaign. In certain quarters enthusiasm had markedly died away; and there were many indications that Gleason's popularity was already on the wane. For many of the inhabitants—especially those of the residential section—the whole campaign

The Reform Boomerang

had been something of a boomerang. If an honest vote could be taken, Bellamy believed they would express their contentment at having conditions the way they were before the moral upheaval. The reporter was convinced that Gleason was a mountebank, and that his interests were largely commercial.

When he was seated in front of the evangelist's desk, he drew out the newspaper which contained a record of the sermon he had read that afternoon at the office.

"See here, Mr. Gleason," he began, a little peremptorily. "I'd like to know the names that you omitted from this sermon. If what you say here is true, the matter should be made known—unless there is a good reason for hiding it. It isn't altogether square to hide behind innuendoes; and if you've got the goods, I wish you'd let me know."

Gleason was taken aback by the young man's aggressive manner. He had come to look upon Bellamy as one of his strongest supporters, and he realised how much Bellamy's writings had helped the cause. Now he felt that the young man had suffered a change of heart; and the fact irritated and angered him.

"I don't pull anything, son," he answered, hotly, "unless I have got the goods. And, another thing, I am the umpire in this campaign—not you. I'll tell you just what I want to tell you—and no more. Get me?"

"Suit yourself, Gleason," Bellamy answered, rising. "You may be able to flim-flam the other citizens of this town, but your four-flushing doesn't get over with me. I got your number the first time I saw you. I helped you out in this campaign because it was my duty to my paper—not because of any love I bore you or your cause. But there's a lot of people in this town that

The Eternal Magdalene

are sick of your hypocrisy, and I'm one of them. The *Star* has stood by you; but, so far as I am concerned, you'll have to get another publicity organ. I'm going to tell the truth about you. I'm going to lay you wide open in to-morrow's paper. I've called your bluff on those insinuations in last night's sermon, and if you don't want to open up, I'll make you open up. You'll be the laughing stock of this town."

Gleason was red in the face. His first instinct was to tell Bellamy to get out and do his worst. But, when he thought of what that might mean, he forced his diplomacy to the front. He did not want to lose the *Star's* support; he needed it to cement the finish of his campaign. The *Star* was too influential to be turned into an enemy at just this stage of the game.

"Look here, Bellamy," he said conciliatingly. "Everybody in Edenburg will know to-night who the guy is I refer to. I'm saving it for the blow-off. That's why I didn't want to put you wise right now. . . . But, if you think I'm bluffing, listen, and I'll shoot."

Bellamy waited without a word.

"It's Elijah Bradshaw!" Gleason spoke the words dramatically, and sat back to watch the effect upon the young man.

"I've heard that before," the reporter returned, unmoved. "But you know it's a lie, as well as I do."

"A lie!" cried the other, starting to his feet. "It's a lie, is it? Well, listen to me, and you'll learn something. I got a straight tip that Bradshaw had a bad woman in his house. I didn't believe it till I snouted around and found out for sure. I went to the police, and they verified the story. You know this woman he's got working for him—the new one. Well, she's an old-timer.

The Reform Boomerang

Every man on the force knows her. The Chief even sent a guy around to put Bradshaw wise, in case he didn't know it. Did Bradshaw drive her away when he found out? Not that old hypocrite! And she's in his house now. Judge Bascomb knows about her. So does Doc Smollet; and a whole lot of other people in town know about her." He paused. "It's a wonder you newspaper men wouldn't get wise," he added. "If I didn't know any more about my business than you do about yours, I'd choke myself to death."

Bellamy was too stunned to reply. He had wondered a little at the presence of the new maid in Bradshaw's home, but that there had been anything irregular in her being there he had not once imagined. If what Gleason had told him just now were true, he thought it obvious that Bradshaw did not know the true state of affairs. There surely was some mistake, or some reasonable explanation for it; and he determined to find out what he could from Gleason and then make an investigation of his own.

"What do you propose doing, Gleason?" he asked, non-committally.

"Well, I thought I'd first pull what I did last night," the evangelist answered. "Then I'd wait and see if Bradshaw had sense enough to get rid of her. But he wasn't even at the meeting. To-night, son, I'm going to make an example of him. After the meeting at the Tabernacle I'm going to lead a procession over to Bradshaw's house. I'm going to demand a public explanation. I'll show 'em how much I'm influenced by his money. That's me!"

"You'd better go easy, Gleason," Bellamy warned him. "If what you say about Bradshaw is true, you

The Eternal Magdalene

know, as well as I do, that there's some good reason for what he's done."

"Sure, there's a reason!" Gleason answered, with satisfied conviction. "He's a hypocrite. That's reason enough."

"When it comes to hypocrisy," Bellamy said angrily, "you've got him lashed to the mast twenty different ways."

With that, he left the office. He went direct to Police Headquarters to verify Gleason's accusation. When he discovered that there was good cause for the evangelist's belief, he returned to the *Star*, intending to speak to Harrison before taking any action. There he met the Reverend Smollet.

"I was waiting for you, Mr. Bellamy," Smollet announced, with repressed excitement. "I don't know what to do, and I thought I'd talk the matter over with you before taking any steps. You're pretty close to Bradshaw."

"I know what you refer to," Bellamy told him. "It's the girl he has in his home, isn't it? . . . Well, how do you account for it?"

"I can't, I can't," replied the minister, in distress. "It seems incredible. I am completely upset. Ever since Gleason's sermon last night I have been too worried to know what to do. And now he tells me that he is going to exhort Bradshaw publicly, that he is going to march to his house to-night and make a scene. Somebody ought to warn him. . . . Only," he added, "it's a very delicate matter. I was thinking that maybe you're the best person to do it."

Bellamy thought a moment.

"I don't know about that," he remarked slowly. "I

The Reform Boomerang

don't stand very strong with Bradshaw. As a matter of fact, I think you'd be the best one. My suggestion would be that you go to Bradshaw at once and find out the inside of this affair. Tell him what Gleason proposes to do, and see if it can't be avoided."

"I hate to do it," Smollet answered, hesitatingly. "It's so personal a matter." He frowned deeply. "But, after all, it may be my duty. No one else will tell him; and, as you say, the trouble might be averted. Do you really think it's the thing for me to do?"

"By all means," the reporter assured him. "Don't waste a minute. See Bradshaw, and then telephone me if there is anything I can do. This oughtn't to get into the newspapers. It might ruin Bradshaw and his family."

"But, if it is true," the Reverend Smollet remarked caustically, "he deserves to be ruined! I can't understand a man like him harbouring a woman of her type in his home. It's a disgrace—a scandal! I, myself, would be tempted to denounce him if he doesn't drive her out at once. . . . It's unspeakable!"

"I wouldn't give any snap judgments," Bellamy told him. "You are condemning him without a trial. I always thought that Christ taught mercy and forgiveness. Here you are planning a man's ruin because he does something you don't like."

The Reverend Smollet arose with injured dignity.

"I act according to my conscience," he remarked coldly. "There is nothing in the Bible that says we must condone and harbour sin. . . . However, I shall go to him and do what I can."

He walked stiffly down the stairs, and went directly to Bradshaw's house.

The Eternal Magdalene

Bradshaw was in the library, plunged deep into a chair, his head resting on his hands.

"My dear friend," Smollet began solicitously, "I am sorry to find you—like this."

"Why should I be made to suffer this way?" the other asked without looking up.

"'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,'" the minister quoted.

Bradshaw now raised himself and looked at the man at his side.

"I tell you, Smollet," he said, earnestly, "I believe it's God's punishment for my pride, my colossal pride. You don't know all that I have suffered—I hope to God you'll never know. My wife's collapse was only the end of a long series of terrible misfortunes—all due to my pride, I tell you—my own smug, serene, sanctified satisfaction in my religion, which hasn't been religion at all, but a canting hypocrisy."

"Don't say that," Smollet put in, reprovingly.

"I do say it!" insisted the other. "I can see it now. I saw it a few days ago when I looked into the face of my dear, stricken wife and felt the props fall from under my money-made faith—the holier-than-thou kind of religion that comes with mahogany pews and subsidised sermons."

Smollet was horrified at his words.

"I am sorry to find you in this frame of mind," he commented.

"So! You are sorry that I found myself out, are you?" Bradshaw asked, bitterly. "Well, it's time I realised my great mistake."

"Nonsense, my dear friend," the other returned, diplomatically. "You have been the very corner-stone of our

The Reform Boomerang

church. Look at the splendid revival which will be closed in a few days! You were instrumental in bringing this great evangelist here."

"Yes, I have written checks," the other agreed, "if that is what you mean; checks that caused me no more effort or sacrifice than if I were to snap my fingers."

"Thousands have been converted," Smollet insisted, making allowances for the other's mental state. "There is no need to tell you what a noble work has been done."

Bradshaw arose wearily and paced up and down the room.

"If it's so, Smollet," he said, abstractedly, "I am very glad."

There was a silence. The minister stood up nervously and began laboriously to fit his fingers together. Finally, he looked at the other man determinedly.

"And now," he began, in a different tone, "if I may be so bold, as your pastor, to speak of a thing that brought me here to-night. It's a matter which brooks no delay."

Bradshaw came to a halt and listened, knowing what was coming.

"It's this young woman in your household," Smollet continued. "I have heard——"

"I know what you have heard," Bradshaw broke in, angrily. "You have heard that she is a poor unfortunate who is trying to redeem herself from a life of shame. Well, Smollet, it's true. There is no need to talk about it.

Smollet looked at him in angry indignation.

"But I marvel at your permitting her to remain in your home," he answered, trying to control himself.

The Eternal Magdalene

"Does it not occur to you that this woman's evil presence may have been the cause of your misfortunes?"

"Smollet," the other man replied, earnestly, "if God has rebuked me for doing an act of simple kindness, then I won't want His clemency. If God is a bigot, a tyrant, an oppressor of the weak, I am sorry I ever spent an hour in His worship. . . . Now is no time to harangue me with this matter. The woman is here, and she is the kind of woman you think she is. But she stays—and that's the end of it."

Smollet was amazed, but he held himself well under control.

"I must press you to listen to me further," he resumed, with tolerant earnestness. "I had hoped to get you to take the advice of your pastor without my having to present the serious phase of the matter. You perhaps don't know it, but your extraordinary conduct has been made a sensational subject for gossip in certain quarters for the past two days. It promises to become a scandal which, due to your importance in the community, will assume alarming proportions. Gleason knows of it, and he went so far last night as to hint broadly at it in his sermon and to pray that you might be brought to a realisation of your offence against the decency of the community."

Bradshaw sprang to his feet.

"He dared do that!"

"He dares do anything—you know that," the minister told him. "He stops at nothing. And just a little while ago I learned that he plans to follow up his meeting to-night by coming here to exhort you publicly. Mind you, I do not approve of everything this man does. I told you that when we discussed bringing him here.

The Reform Boomerang

So to-night, unless I can take him a message from you, he and some of his followers will halt in front of your house, and he will demand that you drive this woman from your roof."

Bradshaw clenched his fist.

"He will demand it, will he?" His voice was hard, and he looked at the minister through narrowed lids.

"That is why I beseech you to turn her out now," Smollet continued. "I want to go back to him and tell him that she has gone. You are my friend, and such a thing as he proposes to do would hurt me deeply."

Bradshaw did not shift his position.

"Turn this woman out," he began, with slow resolution, "this woman who has sat day and night at the bedside of my poor wife—repay her tender devotion by throwing her into the street? Never, Smollet! You may go back to Gleason and tell him that for once Elijah Bradshaw is going to do the decent thing. He may invoke the divine wrath against me. He may kindle for me the fires of Hell. But, just so long as I have a roof and this woman desires its protection, she may stay. The world holds little for me now save the thought of my wife's tender devotion. If it were not the sustaining influence of her virtuous and beautiful life and the fact that she needs me now more than ever, I would end it all, I think. But, while I live, I shall follow the dictates of my own conscience and not be bullied by this hired exhorter who seems, by some strange coincidence, always to find the fields fertile for soul-saving where they are also fallow for dollar-getting."

When Smollet answered, his tone was cold and formal.

"I regret exceedingly your alarming attitude," he said,

The Eternal Magdalene

going to the door, "and I can't promise you what the results of your very unusual behaviour will be."

"Don't spare me." Bradshaw laughed with bitterness. "You have said that the Lord loveth whom He chasteneth. Pray, therefore, that He may love me overmuch, but not more than human endurance can stand."

"Be assured, Elijah, that I shall pray for you."

"And I shall pray that your prayers may reach the divine ear."

Smollet opened the door.

"Shall you be with those of our friends to-night who will come to disgrace me?" Bradshaw asked.

"I shall be on the side of righteousness," replied the minister, as he went out.

No sooner had he gone than the telephone rang. Bellamy had called up to warn Bradshaw, fearing that Smollet might have changed his mind about doing so.

"I have heard about it," Bradshaw told him over the wire. "But don't worry about me. I shall meet them, if it is my last act on earth. I have been everything else but a coward. I would like to quit feeling that at least I am not that. Don't try to do anything about me, my boy. There is no use. I know that crowd. Haven't I been the ringleader of them?"

He hung up the receiver and sat back in his chair for a long time, thinking. It had now grown quite dark. The wind had died down, and the air outside was crisp and still.

Bradshaw looked out of the great French window which faced his open front porch. He could see the houses on the opposite side of the street distinctly silhouetted in the cold moonlight. The world seemed serene now, although he knew that, in a few hours,

The Reform Boomerang

Gleason and his followers would invade the serenity which had settled over the world about him.

Otto came in to turn on the lights, but Bradshaw restrained him.

"I want to be alone," he said. "I won't have dinner to-night. You may bring me some coffee in here. That will be all."

A little later the Woman entered noiselessly and was about to speak to the man, but when she saw the look on his face, she went out without a word, returning to the girl upstairs.

"The time has not yet come," she told Elizabeth. "Your father is sitting in the library alone—in the dark. Something is troubling him deeply. Perhaps it is better that you wait. Stay here in your room. When the time comes, I will let you know."

CHAPTER XVII

“HE THAT IS WITHOUT SIN——”

FOR two hours Bradshaw sat in the darkness. When the servant brought in the coffee, he paid no attention. At half-past ten he arose and began to walk up and down. There was in his eyes a fierce determination. His jaw was set hard, and the muscles in his arms were rigid. He was like a condemned man waiting for his execution—a brave and unflinching man who had resolved to meet death courageously and with his head held high. There was neither cruelty nor aggressiveness in his manner, merely a calm and unswervable determination. There was something bordering on the tragic in his bearing; it was the tragedy of the defeated giant who bows at last to the inevitable, but whose inner strength remains serene and unconquered to the end.

Many things passed through his mind as he walked. He reviewed the whole of his life. In the darkness of the room he saw himself more clearly than he had ever done before, even in the brilliant light of noonday. He thought of his son, and lived again the events which terminated in the boy's departure. He thought of his daughter and of her weakness. He recalled the terrible night when he had found his wife stricken and helpless. All the details of the Woman's association with him rushed back vividly across his mind.

There was no rancour in his soul now. He thought

“He That is Without Sin—”

of the sorrows of the past weeks without animosity. The weakness of those he loved filled him with pity. He became more profoundly conscious of his own strength than ever before. But it was not the strength which his position in the community gave him. Nor was it the strength of his money or of his pride. It was such a strength as the old martyrs possessed when they walked to the stake with a smile and laid down their life—all they had to give—for a belief and a principle.

At a quarter of eleven there was a sound of music far down the street in the direction of the Tabernacle—a murmur and a staccato tramping of feet. As the band came nearer, the angry mutterings of the crowd grew more and more distinct. One or two voices, sharper than the rest, raised themselves above the monotonous murmur. The sounds that came to Bradshaw were angry. They were not the sounds of a happy crowd rejoicing at some victory, but the growling of the beast of prey filled with a lust for blood.

Bradshaw came to a sudden halt. He drew himself up straight and squared his shoulders.

The old servant came into the room hurriedly.

“What is it, sir? What is it?” he asked, excitedly.

“Pull those shades quickly, Otto!” Bradshaw commanded.

The man obeyed with trembling hands.

“Now, bring me my revolver from the cabinet. My friends are paying me a call.”

Otto hesitated, but then did as he was told.

“My God! What is it, sir?” he asked, as he handed Bradshaw the weapon.

“Nothing for you to worry about, Otto, my man,”

The Eternal Magdalene

Bradshaw told him. "Now, go to the rear of the house and stay there. If I need you, I will ring. There may be—some danger in this room."

The crowd drew nearer. Their footsteps echoed along the street. The band was playing one of Gleason's favourite songs, "The Brewer's Big Horses."

Bradshaw stood by the desk and listened. He could hear Gleason's lusty voice leading them, and now the words of the chorus came to him distinctly.

The Woman came into the room and leaned against the mantel, her hands clasped tightly on her breast, her lips blown apart by her quickened breathing.

"I knew they would come! I knew they would come!" she cried fearfully. "They have come for me—they have come to stone me!"

Bradshaw turned to her. The red glow of the fire fell on her face, and to the man it seemed that she had never been so beautiful.

"Let them try!" he said challengingly and with resolution.

He glanced down at the pistol in his hand, and turned the cylinder to make sure it was loaded.

The crowd was now outside his house. The band was still playing, and all the voices seemed to have caught up the militant chorus.

At the end of the last line a stentorian voice cried, "Silence!" It was Gleason's voice, and the crowd became still.

"My friends," Gleason ordered, "stop here a while. This is the home of Elijah Bradshaw. . . ."

The angry mutterings of the crowd recommenced. Words and phrases detached themselves from the general noise.

“He That is Without Sin—”

“Ah-h-h!”

“Bradshaw! Bradshaw!”

“Come out!”

“Say! Where’s your manners?”

“Come out and show yourself!”

“Don’t be backward!”

“Ho, Bradshaw!”

“We’re your friends!”

Again the voice of Gleason took the ascendancy, and the crowd became silent.

“Elijah Bradshaw, the city’s most illustrious backslider!” Gleason went on loudly. “Judas bought a ticket to Hell for thirty pieces of silver. Bradshaw here has bought his ticket, and he’s paid his price. Judas was the arch traitor of his town—Bradshaw is the arch traitor of his. From a leader of the Hosts of God he has fallen into the abyss of sin. At this moment he is harbouring under his roof an unspeakable creature with Hell’s seal upon her.”

The excited crowd, inflamed by the fervour of the evangelist’s words, began calling and yelling again.

“Send her out!”

“Bradshaw—the Judas!”

“Shame!”

“Come out, you traitor!”

Once more Gleason’s angry voice overpowered them, and they were subdued.

“Let him hide in the shadow of his own infamy,” cried Gleason. “And, while he is in hiding, let us pause a moment to pray that this man may be snatched like a brand from the burning.”

He raised his arms and looked up passionately at the stars.

The Eternal Magdalene

"Dear God," he began, "incline Thine ear as we beseech Thee——"

Up to this point Bradshaw had listened without a word. He had not been visible to those outside, nor had he been able to see them. When Gleason began to pray, however, he rushed to the window and spread the curtains. Then he threw open the glass doors and stood out upon the porch, facing the crowd.

"Stop!" he commanded. "We need no prayers of yours." His voice was louder than Gleason's.

The crowd forgot the evangelist's praying and turned to the accused man.

"Ah, Bradshaw!"

"There he is!"

"That's him!"

"There's Judas now!"

"Bradshaw! Bradshaw!"

Bradshaw was calm. He stepped toward the crowd.

"Well, what do you want with me?" he asked.

The cries died down to inarticulate murmurs. Something in the man's manner affected them with reverence. He had always commanded their respect, and now they felt again the power of his personality.

Bradshaw scanned their faces for a moment.

"Ah, Barnes!" he called, pointing to one of the men. . . . "And Jennings! And Stillman! All my friends! . . . And Smollet, too!"

He had caught sight of the minister standing near the evangelist.

Gleason had by this time recovered himself. He had felt that his hold on the crowd had gone temporarily, but now he stepped toward Bradshaw.

“He That is Without Sin—”

“Never mind them!” he cried. “The woman—let her stand forth!” His domineering voice inspired his followers with a new confidence. They had swayed away from him for the moment, but they were again on his side, and caught up his remarks.

“Never mind them!”

“The woman! The woman!”

“Let her stand forth!”

“The woman!”

Bradshaw eyed them unflinchingly. He waited a moment for their voices to die down.

“She shall not!” he then answered. “This is my home, Gleason.” He pointed a threatening finger at the evangelist. “And I want you to go before I send you and some of your saintly crew to face the God you talk to so glibly.”

“The nearer we get to God,” answered Gleason angrily, “the more elbow-room, and the smaller the crowd. Send the woman out!”

The voices broke forth again. The crowd’s excitation had been rising rapidly. A frenzy seemed to have swept over it. It had become cruel and hysterical, and was dominated by the spirit of the mob.

“Yes, send her out!”

“Send out the woman!”

“Where is she?”

Elizabeth had sat at her window upstairs watching what was going on below. At first she had not understood. When Gleason and his band had first come to the house, she had thought it was some friendly demonstration. But when the evangelist had begun to accuse her father, she was seized with fright. She wanted to go down to him, but was afraid.

The Eternal Magdalene

When the voices in the crowd had become louder and angrier, she at last slipped tremblingly down the dark stairway. Slowly she crossed the room. She had not seen the Woman, nor had she been seen. She knew there was nothing she could do; and yet, some instinct of protection drew her to the man on the porch. She was white and trembling. Her hair was down her back, and she wore a loose dressing gown which fell in long folds about her.

She came to her father and knelt down behind him.

When those in the crowd saw her dimly in the shadowy light, they mistook her for the woman they had come for.

A sudden burst of anger arose from them, as from a single throat.

"There she is! There she is!"

"There's the woman!"

"For shame, Bradshaw!"

Then some one in the crowd raised his voice above the others.

"Stone her!"

The others in the crowd caught up the words excitedly.

"Yes! Stone her! Stone her!"

A missile crashed through the window opposite Bradshaw. Then another, and another.

The girl screamed and caught hold of her father.

He put his left arm before his face, and with the other he raised the revolver he was holding behind him. A stone struck him on the breast. He winced with pain, but did not step back.

There was a general clamour and angry calls. Soon

“He That is Without Sin—”

other windows crashed, and a heavy missile flew into the room and broke a vase on the desk.

Bradshaw levelled his revolver at the evangelist.

“Pray now, Gleason!” he exclaimed, in a voice which trembled far out into the night above the calls and hootings of the crowd. “And this time for yourself!”

Elizabeth sprang to her feet and caught her father’s arm in both her hands, pulling it down to his side.

At the sight of the revolver the crowd had stood back, awestruck.

When there was no report Gleason laughed.

“So you thought to frighten me!” he called triumphantly. “Ah, my friends, the Word of God is mightier than all the hosts of sin.”

The crowd recovered from its shock and began calling again.

“Send the woman out!”

“Shame!”

“Why didn’t you shoot, Bradshaw?”

“Coward!”

“Make her come out!”

“Stone her! Stone her!”

Bradshaw stepped a little to one side, that he might better protect the crouching figure behind him, whose hands still tightly clutched his arm. Then he raised his free hand above his head, and looked out fearlessly.

“Stop!” he ordered. “I command you in the words of Christ!”

A hush fell over the crowd at the name which Bradshaw had uttered. Their frenzy had been a religious one, and this appeal had touched the deepest springs of their actions.

The Eternal Magdalene

"The Word of God is mightier than all the hosts of sin!" exclaimed Bradshaw, repeating Gleason's own words. "Therefore, I call to you in Christ's own words—'Let him among you who is without sin first cast a stone at her.'"

He stood majestically confronting the mob.

For a moment there was no response. Then there began low murmurs, but they were not the murmurs of anger, but of uneasiness. The hysteria of the crowd had been spent. A reaction had settled over them.

A shrill voice called out: "Come on, Jimmy! Can't you see he's beat you at your own game?"

There were sounds of approval. Other voices joined in.

"Ha! He got you that time."

"Good for Bradshaw!"

"What have you got to say now, Jimmy?"

Gleason, confused by this sudden change of events, hesitated. Then he turned to the crowd with his old self-confidence.

"Come on over to the Tabernacle," he called out dictatorially. "We'll pray for him there, though I think he's past redemption."

He took a step forward, and the crowd began to move with him, following by blind instinct their leader.

"Quit shoving!"

"Who's shoving?"

"You are."

"Get off that flower bed!"

"What's the matter with the band?"

"Spiel, can't you?"

"Hey, what's your hurry?"

Gleason called angrily to the musicians.

“He That is Without Sin—”

“Are you hypnotised, you fellows? Toot her up there, and be quick about it!”

At once the band struck up the tune they had been playing earlier in the evening. The crowd fell into step and marched down the street, some muttering, others laughing, still others silent.

The noise grew fainter and fainter in the distance. Bradshaw stood at the window and listened.

When the sounds had died away, he turned slowly. He slipped the revolver in his pocket, and put both his hands on the head of the kneeling figure. Then he raised her slowly to her feet. The room was dark and he could not see her face. He thought it was the Woman before him, and led her tenderly to the desk.

“You see, I would not let them harm you,” he said gently. “I was ready to protect you with my own life.”

The girl did not speak. Both hands were pressed close to her face, and she was sobbing audibly.

Bradshaw switched on the desk lamp and drew the girl’s head back, that he might look into her face.

Then, for the first time, he saw who she was. He realised that, all the time, he had not been protecting the Woman, but his young daughter.

For a moment he could not speak through sheer wonder and amazement. Then something inside of him seemed to burst, and a great wave of tenderness swept through his whole body.

“Bess—my daughter! My own little girl!” he cried. “I thought—I didn’t know—my baby!”

He clasped her to his breast with such overpowering love as he had never felt for her before, and she clung to him, weeping bitterly.

The Eternal Magdalene

"There! I know—I know," he consoled her. "You have come back to me—and you shall stay with me—my baby girl."

He looked about the room for the Woman, but she had gone.

"And you forgive me?" the girl sobbed.

Bradshaw held her very close to him and kissed her.

"Yes, I forgive you," he said, and his voice shook. "May God forgive you as I do."

He sat down and drew her to his knees, holding her in his arms as he might have held a baby.

When her weeping had ceased, he arose and led her to the stairway.

"And now," he said, kissing her again, "go to your room—your old room. We shall begin anew—and all the past will be forgotten. . . . Good night, my little child."

She looked up into his eyes with calm and ineffable happiness, and went slowly up the stairs.

Bradshaw sat down at his desk. He was a different man now. The many tendencies which had been at work in him during the last two weeks had been unified by the event of that night. He realised how little his former life had meant to him. Somehow, he did not care what the world thought of him, or what the papers would publish on the morrow. He felt more secure than ever before, for now his security came from within, not from without.

He rang the bell, and in a moment Otto came in, trembling and white with fright.

"It's all right, Otto," Bradshaw said. "There is nothing to fear now. They have gone away. Close the windows and draw the shades."

“He That is Without Sin—”

The servant did as he was bidden. He picked up the pieces of broken glass and gathered up the débris from the desk where the vase had been broken.

“Is that all?” he asked.

“Yes. You may go to bed now,” Bradshaw told him; and even Otto was conscious of a tone in his master’s voice, which he had never heard before.

He was about to leave, when some one knocked at the front door.

It was Bellamy.

The young man walked in, hurriedly, without waiting to be announced.

“What happened, Mr. Bradshaw?” he asked excitedly. “Tell me everything. I’ve got to say something about it in the paper—only, God knows, I wish I didn’t have to.”

“Say whatever you choose, my boy,” the older man replied, with grave serenity. “It makes no difference. I feel happier now than ever in my life before.”

Bellamy looked at him wonderingly.

“You see,” Bradshaw went on, “I had everything sized up wrong before. It isn’t what people say about you that matters—it isn’t even what they think of you. It’s what you feel here.” And he struck his breast with his hand.

The reporter waited.

“Gleason came,” the other man continued. “He tried to bully me, and the crowd demanded that I send the woman out to them. But I defied them, and quoted the words of Christ to them; and they went away.”

“What did you say?” Bellamy asked, in an awed voice.

“I said: ‘Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone at her.’”

The Eternal Magdalene

"You said that!" Bellamy cried, in happy admiration. Then his newspaper instinct rose uppermost.

"My God! What a story that will make!"

"Don't spare me, my boy," Bradshaw told him. "I can bear it now. . . . This will be a fight worth while."

"Don't spare you!" repeated the reporter, surprised. "Why, man, I'll make you the hero of this city. Already the tide has begun to turn against Gleason. This story will be the end of him. You've done the biggest thing that any one in this city has ever done before—you've won the biggest victory. To-morrow there won't be a man or woman that reads the *Star* who won't thank God that they know you. . . . Leave that to me—I know how to write a story. All this other stuff of mine has been insincere. Now, for the first time, I can put my heart into it."

"And the woman?" asked Bradshaw.

"Why, Mr. Bradshaw," Bellamy exclaimed enthusiastically, "that will be the big climax in the story! When I tell these people that you have taken her into your house to try to help her instead of hounding her out of town, they'll learn a lesson in Christian sympathy that they never thought possible before. And to think that you protected her against the vicious cruelty of Gleason's mob! They'll love and admire you for it."

He leaped to his feet.

"I must run along and get to work. This is almost too good to be true!"

He went out hurriedly. He hailed the first taxicab he saw, and drove to the other newspaper offices. He went to the City Editors who knew him and liked him. He told them the story from his own point of view. They listened with keen interest. Like the majority

“He That is Without Sin—”

of newspaper men who had had practical experience with vice conditions, they were not any too strongly inclined toward Gleason's methods, and were glad of an opportunity in the form of a straight news story which would tend to reflect unpleasantly on the evangelist.

The wheels having thus been set in motion, Bellamy rushed to his office and set to work with an energy he had rarely displayed before.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY

THE following morning the newspapers with one accord commended Bradshaw's action. They did not deprecate Gleason, except by intimations; but there were few men in the city whose sympathies were not with Bradshaw. Heretofore his actions had never been questioned; even those who disagreed with him respected his sincerity. They remembered Edenburg's debt to him. They remembered, too, his past conduct, his honesty, his uprightness; and while there were some who, on reading the stories in the morning's papers, questioned the wisdom of his act in taking a woman of the streets into his home, they did not doubt for a moment his good faith.

As Bellamy had told Bradshaw, the tide against Gleason had begun to turn. The conditions which the evangelist had brought about through his moral campaign had not been, from a civil point of view, altogether satisfactory. Adverse criticism had been growing rapidly during the few days preceding Gleason's procession to the merchant's home. The more cynical citizens of Edenburg laughed at the evangelist's defeat, and even the members of the Citizens' Committee, along with those who had contributed to his campaign, admired Bradshaw for his act.

As early as half-past eight that morning, prominent

In a Mysterious Way

men and women of the city began calling Bradshaw by telephone to express their approval and admiration for what he had done. Several of them asked him if he would advise them to follow the same course and attempt a similar reformation of some woman of the Tenderloin. They said that, if he was willing to take such a woman into his home, they would be glad to follow his example.

"I have come to the conclusion," he answered them, "that there is too much cruelty, and too little charity, in our former method of driving these women out of town. As to what should be done—that I will leave to your own conscience. The whole problem is so complex that the most we can do is to experiment."

As he sat in the library, waiting for breakfast to be announced, the door opened, and Martha Bradshaw, supported by the Woman, entered the room.

The man leapt to his feet with a cry of joy.

"Martha!" he exclaimed. "What miracle is this?"

"It is no miracle," the Woman answered. "The only miracle is in the change of your own heart."

Bradshaw remembered the doctor's words—that his wife's condition was due to some terrible shock, and that, were her mind relieved of its tragic suffering, her recovery might be assured.

He crossed the room and took his wife in his arms. She was still very weak. Her face was white and drawn and she could stand only with support. He carried her to a large chair and placed her in it tenderly, kneeling down by her side, his arms still about her.

There were tears in Martha Bradshaw's eyes.

"My little girl has come back to me," she said. "She is safe, and I am happy. When I saw her, a great

The Eternal Magdalene

weight seemed to lift from my body and from my mind. It was as if I had been bound down by heavy shackles which fell from me at the sight of her. . . . I am so happy! I know now I shall get well. . . . If only my son were here, too!"

She turned to the Woman.

"And you have been so good to me," Martha Bradshaw said to her. "I haven't been able to thank you before." She smiled sadly. "Oh, Elijah! If you only knew how tender and solicitous she has been during all my helplessness!"

She put her arms around the kneeling man.

"And last night!" she went on. "That made me happier——"

"You heard? You know?" Bradshaw asked, in surprise.

"How could I help it?" she replied. "I lay in bed and prayed that you would do just what you did."

The man could not speak for a moment. He looked first at his wife, and then at the Woman who stood near him, with her head bowed.

"I am glad," was all he could say.

At that moment the doctor arrived. During Mrs. Bradshaw's illness he had called regularly each morning. When he saw her now, he did not seem surprised, but came to her and held out his hand.

"Doctors are not much good, after all," he said pleasantly. "I told you, Bradshaw, that she would only get well if we could discover and rectify the cause of the shock."

Then he assumed his professional air.

"But, you must be very careful," he said, turning again to Mrs. Bradshaw. "Rest as much as you can.

In a Mysterious Way

Naturally, the shock has racked your system, and it will take some time for you to recover completely. I'll come in every day or two and see that you are minding me."

He then turned to the Woman.

"You have been very good and very careful," he said. "I was going to send a trained nurse, but I believe you have been even better than she would have been."

He shook hands with Bradshaw, and went out.

"Where is Elizabeth now?" the mother asked, when he had gone.

"She will be down very soon," the Woman told her. "I heard her moving about her room when we passed it."

"Tell her to make haste," Bradshaw said, and his voice was very gentle. "We shall all have breakfast together."

An hour later the Reverend Smollet rang.

"Bradshaw," he said humbly, "I have come to offer you my apologies. Last night you taught me something—me, who was supposed to be a teacher of His word. You opened my eyes to a Christian point of view which, I regret to say, I had lost sight of. Your conduct was splendid—noble! You were in the right, and I am ashamed to think that I was allied against you with Gleason. I have spent most of the night in prayer and in contemplation of what you said and did. . . . I had my sermon all prepared for this morning, but I am going to change it. I am going to take my text from your words last night: 'Let him who is without sin among you first cast a stone at her.' And I shall tell what I saw and what happened. I shall make it a personal sermon. And I shall confess the unworthiness of my own

The Eternal Magdalene

conduct last night. I shall make the people who hear me realise, more than they do now, the great lesson in Christian charity which you have taught them. I am on my way to services now, but I could not refrain from dropping in and telling you this. . . . Will you attend this morning?"

Bradshaw hesitated.

"Not this morning, Smollet," he said. "I want to stay with my dear wife and my daughter. You see, Smollet, the Lord chasteneth whom He loveth, but He also rewards us. Mrs. Bradshaw was able to come downstairs this morning. The doctor was here, and he said that her complete recovery would be but a matter of a short time."

The minister was deeply moved.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed. "I am happy beyond words. That, too, shall go into my sermon. . . . Ah, Bradshaw! we never grow so old that we cannot learn more of His infinite mercy."

"But no man, I believe, Smollet," Bradshaw replied earnestly, "has learned as much as I have during these last two weeks. I have changed from the very foundation. I have found how narrow, even despicable, my life has been. The values I attached to things were all false. I have been hard and unforgiving. There has been no charity in my soul—no leniency or compassion in my heart. I have worshipped at the feet of false gods. . . . But that is all over now. I realise that my misfortunes have been of my own making, that it was I who brought disaster, not only on myself, but on those I loved. My house has been cursed. . . . Do you remember the letter I showed you some time ago from a young girl who had been thrown out into the streets?"

In a Mysterious Way

. . . It frightened me, although I am not superstitious; and when my sorrows came to me, I was inclined to think that this girl was directing some sinister powers against me. But now I know that the germ of her curse was in my own blood, that my own harshness and blindness brought about my misfortunes."

When the minister had gone, Bradshaw went in to his wife. Few words passed between them; words were unnecessary to express the peace and happiness which both of them felt.

When, later, she had gone to her room to lie down, the Woman came in to Bradshaw.

"What about your son?" she asked him.

"My son?" The man looked at her wonderingly.

"Can you not forgive him, too?" the Woman asked, in a pleading voice.

Bradshaw studied her for a moment.

"It was because—of what—he did to you——" he began.

"Oh, but, you see, I understand," the Woman said. "And because I understand, I forgave him. Your son is not bad. He sinned because of his tenderness and love for the girl."

"If he loved her so," Bradshaw demanded, "how could he have——"

"He saw in me the girl he loved," the Woman explained. "He saw in my eyes her look, just as you saw in my eyes the look of the woman you loved long ago."

"I don't understand it all," Bradshaw commented in a low, awe-struck voice. "It all seems so strange."

"But *I* understand," the Woman went on, "and that's why I want you to forgive him. You must believe me

The Eternal Magdalene

when I tell you that he loves this girl, and that she needs him. She is only a child, like your own daughter. She has already suffered much. *Her* misfortunes were not of her own making."

"What do you want me to do?" the man asked.

"I want you to send for him," the Woman replied. "You know where he is. He has written to you. . . . Tell me, what is he doing—how is he?"

"He is working hard," Bradshaw answered. "I believe he is trying to do the best he can."

"I knew it! I knew it!" the Woman said. "I told you he was not bad. And is he not sorry for the sufferings he has caused you?"

"Yes," the man admitted. "He says he is very sorry."

"Then you will send for him, won't you?" she pleaded. "He will be happier here. He, too, has learned a lesson. And you can help him. He would be better off here, near you."

Bradshaw looked into the Woman's eyes for a moment. He found it impossible to resist her request; and, deep in his heart, he was glad of his inability to do so.

"I will send for him," the man said.

"Thank you," the other answered simply, as if he had performed some personal favour for her.

At noon that day, Bellamy came to the house. Bradshaw greeted him heartily.

"Thank you, my boy," he said, "for what you did. It was more than I could have expected. Last night I thought the entire town would turn against me—that I would be disgraced."

"That's what made your conduct so fine," the reporter

In a Mysterious Way

answered admiringly, shaking the other's hand. "But I told you that I would make a hero of you—that is," he corrected himself, "that I would make these people realise what a hero you are. Gleason won't open his mouth. He's too wise for that. He knows that he's licked. I dropped in to see him this morning, and tried to get some statement out of him. All he did was to sidestep, and say that there were certain iniquities which God must deal with direct. His time here is up to-morrow, and I guess he'll be glad to move on to another town. He's made his little pile, anyway; and that's all that interests him."

He looked up at Bradshaw with a touch of embarrassment, and smiled.

"Where's Bess?" he asked. "May I see her?"

"Of course, you may," the older man said pleasantly. He started to ring for Otto.

"Just a minute, Mr. Bradshaw," Bellamy said. "There's a question I want to ask you first. . . . How do you feel about this whole Tenderloin question?"

The other frowned and thought for a moment.

"I don't know exactly," he answered, after a slight pause. "One thing is sure, however:—that statement I was writing for your paper is never going to be published. I have come to the conclusion that this is a matter which can't be settled as simply as Gleason imagines."

"Then you have changed your mind somewhat, I presume," Bellamy commented, in a matter-of-fact voice.

"Yes, you might say that I have," Bradshaw agreed.

The reporter beamed.

"Remember your promise, Mr. Bradshaw!" he exclaimed.

The Eternal Magdalene

"What promise?"

"Don't pretend you've forgotten it," Bellamy laughed. "That wouldn't be fair. You remember you told me that if you changed your mind on this subject, you would on another subject as well—about Bess and me."

Bradshaw smiled graciously.

"You know, my boy," he said. "I am a man of my word. . . . And, anyway," he added, "even if I hadn't changed my mind on the Tenderloin question, I'd want you for a son-in-law."

He sobered immediately. For a moment he had forgotten his daughter's running away.

"Bess is a good girl," he said soberly, "in spite of what she's done. I think she'll be worthy of you. She loves you, too. I have forgiven her; and I want you to know how deeply I appreciate—your attitude. I am proud of you. I only hope my own son will always be like you. . . . Go to her now, my boy. I was about to send for her; but I think she's in the living-room. Go in to her, yourself."

Bellamy found Elizabeth alone.

"Are you happy?" he asked her, sitting down beside her.

"Almost," the girl answered. "Oh! If I had only not gone away! . . . But father was so good and kind to me. . . . I am going to try so hard to forget what I did."

"And I am going to help you to forget it," the man answered, taking her hand. "I have just had a talk with your father. He has changed his mind about a lot of things—and about me. He sent me in here to you now. I really think he is glad that I love you the way I do."

The girl looked away. She was still trying to fight

In a Mysterious Way

down her shame, for she could not put from herself the memory of her disgrace.

Bellamy understood, and drew her to him.

"Listen, Bess," he began earnestly, "you mustn't be foolish any more. You were only a child when you went away, and no one in the world could blame you for doing it. We are going to put it out of our lives. You mustn't ever think about it, and you mustn't ever imagine that I am going to think about it. If any one was to blame, it was I for having brought him here. I didn't know what a beast he was—I thought I could trust him. But he has gone now, and I don't think he'll come back. You must let the memory of him go out of your life just as he has gone out of your life. I shall be very good to you, and we are going to be happy. In a very little while we shall be married. . . . Now, tell me that you are happy."

She looked up at him and tried to smile, but, despite her efforts, tears forced themselves to her eyes.

"I am happy," she managed to say.

He drew her head to his shoulder.

"Then, if you are happy," the man whispered in her ear, smiling whimsically, "you mustn't cry. That's no way to be happy. When people are happy, they smile—just as I am smiling."

She raised her head, and touched his cheek with her lip. Then she too smiled through her tears. . . .

The next evening Paul returned to Edenburg. Elijah Bradshaw met him at the door. Putting his arm around his son, he led him into the library.

"I wired you that I had forgiven you, my boy," the older man said gently, "and now I want you to hear it from my own lips. That is why I sent for you to

The Eternal Magdalene

come back. I want you to start all over again here—with my help. And whenever anything troubles you, I want you to come to me and tell me all about it. Things will be different now—I think I'll understand you. I want your confidence."

"I would always have come to you, father," the young man told him, "but I was afraid to. You were always so——"

"Go ahead and say it," Elijah Bradshaw put in when the other hesitated. "I was hard and unreasonable, wasn't I? . . . Well, I am not going to be that way any more."

"And Ruth?"

"Do you love her?" his father asked him.

"I love her—very much," the young man said simply. "And you would, too," he added, "if you knew her."

"I think I know her better now than I did before," the older man said.

"You have met her?"

"No, but I have been told about her."

"You mean the new woman here in the house told you?" Paul looked at his father, puzzled.

The other nodded.

"Who is this woman, father?" the son asked. "There's something strange about her. She is so different from any of the other servants."

Bradshaw did not answer. He put his hand on his son's shoulder. "Go to your mother, now," he said. "Be very good to her. She has been ill. Thank God, she is better now. She will be glad to see you."

The young man turned to leave the room, but his mother stood in the doorway, smiling with a new happiness.

In a Mysterious Way

"My son! My son!" she cried, gathering him in her arms. "I was afraid you weren't coming back."

There was something in her words that actualised Bradshaw's suspicions that his wife had not believed him when he had explained why Paul was going away.

That night, after dinner, Bradshaw sat alone in his study. Bellamy had come to the house, and was sitting with Elizabeth by the open fire in the living-room. Martha Bradshaw was resting in her room, and her son sat close beside her.

Bradshaw had felt the need of being alone, and had gone to his study. He wanted to think over the miraculous events of the last few weeks. A great peace and contentment had entered his soul. There was a smile of happiness about his firm lips.

He smoked a while in silence. There was only one dim light glowing in the room.

Some one entered and drew near to him. He looked up, and there stood the Woman. She wore the long cloak in which she had first appeared to him. The hood was pulled over her hair.

Before the man could speak, she said: "I am going now. My task is done."

"You are going?" He became suddenly aware of his great need for her. "You mustn't go."

"Yes," returned the Woman quietly. "I must leave you now. It is time. Your wife has recovered. Your son is home again. Your own daughter has come back to you."

"My own daughter!" exclaimed the man. "But you, too, are my daughter!"

"No," said the Woman, "I am not your daughter."

Bradshaw arose, dumfounded.

The Eternal Magdalene

"You are not my daughter!"

The Woman shook her head.

"Then you deceived me!"

"I never told you I was your daughter," she replied. "You, yourself, said it. It was your conscience that spoke."

The man looked at her, dazed.

"I don't—understand. My punishment seems greater than I deserved, for I have grown to love you; and now you say you must leave me. My heart goes out to others who suffer as I have suffered."

"That is why my task is done," the Woman answered. "When you stood there last night and spoke His words, I knew that I need stay no longer."

"But I want you to stay," Bradshaw persisted.

"I have no choice," the other returned, moving away from him. "I only obey. I have my work to do."

"Stop!" cried Bradshaw. "If you are not my daughter, who are you? You come into my house like a thief in the night, and you bring with you a curse, a curse that has sent me through Hell. And now you say your work is done, that you must go. . . . Tell me, why did you come here?"

The Woman looked at him resolutely.

"I came here to reach your heart and to humble your pride. I came here, not to teach you that you should condone sin, but to awaken you to a sense of your own unworthiness to sit in judgment on your fellow-creatures. I came here to prove to you that our misfortunes are not always of our own making."

The man sank back in his chair.

"And you have taught me that lesson well," he said.

There was a silence.

In a Mysterious Way

Then Bradshaw suddenly drew himself up.

"But you have not explained to me who you are," he said sternly.

He arose and, going to the Woman, put both his hands on her shoulders.

"Before you go," he commanded her, "before you pass that door, you shall tell me who you are."

The Woman drew herself up and raised her head. A divine light shone in her eyes, as if her face had been illumined by some supernatural power.

"Listen," she said, and her clear voice filled the room with its resonant richness:

"I am the eternal Magdalene, made immortal by the touch of His hand, two thousand years ago. When they that would have stoned me turned sullenly away, He raised me up, saying: 'Woman, I appoint thee My messenger. Go thou down the centuries and bear witness to this that thou hast seen. In every clime and in every season thou wilt find those who have sinned as thou has sinned. Stand between them and their persecutors as I have stood between thee and thine. And upbraid them not, for are they not all children of the same Father? There are among my disciples those who will preach of many things, but to you I entrust this text, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.'" And He departed and I stood as one transfixed, gazing after Him. And my brow burned from His touch, and through my veins flowed blood that had been cleansed as by fire."

When she had finished speaking, Bradshaw dropped down in a chair at his desk, and covered his face with his hands. He had been awed by the vision of the Woman, and her words had penetrated to the innermost

The Eternal Magdalene

depths of his consciousness. He was inspired by a reverence which he had never before felt. He had hid his face, as from something too holy to be desecrated by mortal eyes.

After a time he took his hands away, and glanced again out into the room.

The Woman was no longer there.

He sprang to his feet and called to her, but no one answered. He went to the front door and, opening it, looked into the cold, starry night.

The street was empty.

THE END

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

REC'D LD-URL

AUG 05 1998

JUL 19 1998

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 052 465 2

U