

# THE ROOT OF EVIL

BY THOMAS DIXON



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## CHAPTER II.

### A Lover's Quarrel.

WHEN Stuart reached the Gramercy park house a maid answered at last and ushered him into the dimly lit parlor.

"Nan is at home, Herta?" he asked eagerly.

"The little Danish maid smiled knowingly."

"But Meetsa Primrose?"

"A groan Stuart sank to a chair. The picture had been redecorated. An oriental rug of dazzling pattern was on the newly polished floor. Instead of the set of Chippendale mahogany the Primroses had bought from the south a complete set of stately gilded stuff filled the room and heavy draperies to match hung from the tall windows and fold-downs. The mother's velvet had been at once. Of course she had not needed the money from Hivens. She had no shrewd for that. But she had looked it beyond a doubt, and she had evidently gone the limit of her credit without a moment's hesitation. How far had she had got with this? Could it be possible that Nan had left him tonight? No—preposterous."

"Primrose greeted him with unfeigned diffidence."

"Jim, this is such a glorious surprise. Nan didn't expect you till morning and she will be heartbroken to miss you even for a half hour. Dear, dear boy, you have no idea how both of us have been with you the past two weeks."

"I missed me, too, Mrs. Primrose. I missed you, Jim! You've never been like one of us. You know I always loved you next to Nan."

"I spoke with such fervor that Stuart quivered. It was sinister. She evidently felt sure of his ruin."

"I needed you here so much to help me fix up. We've had the good time out our second floor to a young man."

"Hivens, see?"

"By, how did you know?" she asked with a start.

"Woodman has just received a letter from him, dated here. He asked my advice about it."

"Here's Nan?" Stuart asked, with an anger in spite of his effort to be cool.

"By, she's giving a little box party at her theater tonight."

"And our mutual friend, John C. Hivens, is presiding?"

"Dr. Jim, how could you be so bold?" she protested indignantly. "I been saving money for a month for Nan this chance to return to her. I need Mr. Hivens' money to pay the rent of this big house. I pay attention on his part to Nan and she is disgusting to me beyond measure."

ed from the depths of her eyes as her head lifted.

Stuart, unable to wait longer, was about to spring to her side when she caught the dash of his laughing face in the mirror and turned.

"Oh, you rascal! To surprise me like this!" she cried, with joyous laughter. "In all your pride and vanity?"

"You can't help being a little vain yourself, Jim, any more than I can. You know you're a stunning looking fellow. These Yankee girls all love you at first sight—the tall, straight, sinewy figure, strong and swift in every movement, the finely chiselled face, the deep set, dark brown eyes under their heavy brows, that big masterful jaw and firm mouth."

Stuart suddenly took her in his arms and kissed her into silence.

"Hush, Nan. I don't like the way you say that."

"Why? Am I too modest?"

"No, too deliberate and coldly mistress of yourself. I wish you loved me a little more tumultuously as I do you."

"Well, let me whisper then that your return tonight has made a perfect ending to a perfect day. Oh Jim, I've been so happy tonight! Seated in that big stage box I felt that I was somebody. This is the first really decent dress I've ever had in my life."

"And you are proud and happy?"

"Proud for your sake, Jim, yes; and happy in your love."

Stuart's face clouded and he turned away, startled for the first time by a strange similarity in the tone of Nan's voice to her mother's.

The painful impression was suddenly broken by a quick touch of Nan's hand on his arm.

"Oh, Jim, I'm glad you came a day earlier. I've something to tell you, something wonderful, something that will bring our happiness near!" Her voice sank to the tenderest accents. "You know Mr. Hivens?"

"Yes," Stuart answered evenly, controlling himself with an effort.

"Well, he has taken our second floor. I had a long talk with him last week. By the merest accident I learned that his big trust, the American Chemical company, needs another lawyer. They pay an enormous salary with all sorts of chances to get rich. They are making millions on millions. I told him that you were the very man for the place and that you were going to be the greatest lawyer in New York. Imagine my joy when he not only agreed with me, but said he would double the salary if you would accept it. He thought you wouldn't, merely because you lived in the house of old Woodman with whom the company may have a fight. I told him it was nonsense, that I knew you would accept. You'll accept, of course?"

"Emphatically no!"

"You can't be so absurd!"

"Have you been receiving the attentions of this distinguished young millionaire, Nan?"

"I've been outwitting him."

"Cultivating?"

"Yes, for your sake only, you big, handsome, foolish, jealous boy! You can't be in earnest when you say that you will refuse such an offer?"

"Yes, because I will not become the hireling of a corporation, to say nothing of this particular one headed by Mr. Hivens."

"Nonsense, Jim. You wouldn't be a hireling. You would say the law down for them to follow."

"No. A modern corporation has no soul, and the man who serves this master must sell both body and soul for the wages he receives. I am a lawyer of the old school. My work is illumined by imagination. My business is to enforce justice in the relations of men."

"But some of the greatest lawyers in America are corporation attorneys!"

"All the reason more why I should keep clean. Lawyers once constituted our aristocracy of brain and culture. I can't prostitute my talents to a work I don't believe in. A man's work is a revelation of what he is. And what he is will depend at last on what he does."

"But you mean to be rich and powerful, Jim?"

"If it comes with the growth of manhood and character, yes. But I will not degrade myself with work I hate or take orders from men I despise. The world is already full of such slaves."

Stuart paused and laid his hand gently on the girl's white, round arm, and she turned, with a start.

"I didn't hear your last sentence, Jim."

"Of what were you thinking?"

"Of what a woman is always thinking—consciously or unconsciously, of my home—whether it shall be a hovel or a palace."

"It all depends on whether love is the builder!"

"It all depends on the man I marry," was the laughing answer. "I've always dreamed of you as a man of wealth and power. Your splendid talents mean this. When you came to New York I was more sure of you than ever. You've simply got to make money, Jim. Nothing else counts in the world today. I hate poverty—I fear it—I loathe it!"

"And yet," the lover said, drawing closer, "I hold the touch of your little finger of greater value than all the gold on the earth or beneath it."

"Don't interrupt me, please, with irrelevant remarks," Nan cried, laughing in spite of herself. "Seriously, Jim—you must listen to me. I'm in dead earnest. You must have money, if for no other reason because I wish it. I can't be happy in poverty. The man I love must be rich. Oh, Jim, you shall be! Wealth is the only road now from the vulgar crowd—the only way to climb on top."

"But suppose I don't wish to climb on the top of people?"

"You can't be such a fool!"

"But suppose I am? True civilization has always placed manhood above money."

"Jim, are you crazy?"

"It's true, dear. My father gave up his law practice to bend over my mother's bedside for six months. He was a giant in mind and body—she a poor little, broken, withered invalid. He lost money and clients and never regained them. Did it pay? Does anything that's born of love pay? Surely not children. I was always a dead expense. The biggest fee I ever received as a lawyer in New York was a shout of joy from a poor woman whose boy I freed from a false charge of crime. She fell sobbing before me and actually kissed my feet."

"Oh, Jim, why can't you be practical? Why are you not willing to fight for a fortune—as other men?"

"Because, dear," he answered quickly and tenderly, "we haven't time—you and I. Life is too short. Love is too sweet. The fields are too green."

**The Connoisseur's Surprise.**

An amusing story of the expense of a certain high French official is told by a Paris contemporary. He was showing one of his friends the magnum opus of his collection of pictures, a landscape of the environs of Paris, and depicting the city as it was in Courbet's time. There could be no doubt as to the authenticity of the picture, for it bore the signature of Courbet in red. The visitor pointed out that the horizon was dirty and would be improved by the application of a cleansing liquid. A bottle was requisitioned and some of the chemical gently applied with a brush. Then was seen a delightful little sketch of the Eiffel tower. It may be observed that Courbet, who was associated in the destruction of the Vendome column, died about a dozen years before the tower was built.

**Wages No Object.**

"Can't you get any work?" asked a woman of the tramp who had applied at the back door for food.

"Yes, ma'am," he replied. "I was offered a steady job by the man who lives down the road in that big white house."

"That's Mr. Oatseed. What was the work?"

"He wanted me to get up at 4 in the morning, milk seventeen cows, feed, water and rub down four horses, clean the stables and then chop wood until it was time to begin the day's work."

"What did he want to pay?"

"I dunno, ma'am. I didn't stop to ask."—Youth's Companion.

**Won, but Not Held.**

A learned English judge asked a woman to marry him because she, knowing his weakness, had mixed a salad so artistically that he declared he could not live without eating another. The judge soon repented of his folly. The lady had a foolish nature and a temper which so tormented her husband that he would prolong the sessions of his court far into the night. "Gentlemen," he was accustomed to say when counsel or jury murmured at the lateness of the hour, "as we must be somewhere, we cannot be better anywhere than we are here."

**Praise For the Growlers.**

"The growlers," says a Georgia philosopher, "are the boys that keep the world moving, for when folks are growling all the time the world stops to ask the reason and straightway finds a remedy for the trouble. If the world paid any attention to the optimists things would be at a standstill. Taking it for granted that everything's O. K. is the end of progress."—Atlanta Constitution.

**He Owns Up to It.**

Once upon a time an Irishman was walking through a lonely cemetery and stopped before an imposing looking monument bearing the following inscription: "I Still Live."

Pat reflected soberly for a moment and then said, "Well, if Oi wfs dead, begorra, O'f'd own up to it!"—Exchange.

**A Grand Army Score.**

A golfer playing his first game of the season reported downtown the next day that he had made a Grand Army score—he went out in 61 and came back in 65.—Chicago Post.

**Would Feel Easier.**

Caddy Master—What sort of caddy do you want, sir? Nervous Novice—Well—er—I'd like a boy who knows very little about the game.—London Sketch.



"The man I love must be rich."

The birds sing too sweetly. Have you forgotten our old day dreams in the fields at home?"

"I've forgotten everything," she answered bitterly, "except that you are failing me when put to the first test. And it would be such a little thing for you to do."

"At the price of my self respect—and you call this a little thing. Great God!"

Nan rose with a sudden gesture of impatience.

"You refuse absolutely to consider this generous offer?"

"Absolutely."

"And you are willing that the woman you love shall live in poverty while her more fortunate sisters laugh and dance in luxury?"

"The one joy of my life will be to gratify every reasonable wish of your body and soul."

"Yet the first reasonable wish I express you refuse to consider. Mr. Hivens says he would make you a millionaire in five years. You're only twenty six now."

"That's very kind of Mr. Hivens, I'm sure. When I need his patronage I'll take my piece in line with other henchmen and ask for it."

Nan suddenly extended her hand.

"Good night."

He attempted to draw her into his arms.

She repulsed him and repeated her cold dismissal:

"Good night."

"Nan, dear," he pleaded, "we've never parted in anger before. Of all the hours of my life this is one in which I—least dreamed of such a thing."

Without a word she turned toward the stairs.

"Nan," he called tenderly.

With a sob she threw herself into his arms.

"Forgive me, Jim."

"Forgive me, dear, if I've seemed unreasonable," was the low answer.

"But you will think it over, won't you? Just for my sake—just because I ask it—won't you?"

"Just because you ask it—yes, I will, dearest."

He kissed her tenderly and walked home with a great sickening fear slowly creeping into his heart.

(To be Continued)

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