



# The THIRD DEGREE

A NARRATIVE OF METROPOLITAN LIFE

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS

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## SYNOPSIS.

Howard Jeffries, banker's son, under the evil influence of Robert Underwood, fellow student at Yale, leads a life of dissipation, marries the daughter of a gambler who died in prison, and is disowned by his father. He is out of work and in desperate straits. Underwood, who had once been engaged to Howard's step-mother, Alicia, is apparently in prosperous circumstances. Taking advantage of his intimacy with Alicia, he becomes a sort of social highwayman. Discovering his true character, Alicia denies him the house. He sends her a note threatening suicide. Art dealers for whom he acted as commissioner, demand an accounting. He cannot make good. Howard calls at the apartments in an intoxicated condition to request a loan of \$2,000 to enable him to take up a business proposition. Howard drinks himself into a maudlin condition, and goes to sleep on a divan. A caller is announced and Underwood draws a screen around the drunken sleeper. Alicia enters. She demands a promise from Underwood that he will not take his life. He refuses unless she will renew her patronage. This she refuses, and takes her leave. Underwood kills himself. The report of the pistol awakens Howard. He finds Underwood dead. Howard is turned over to the police. Capt. Clinton, notorious for his brutal treatment of prisoners, puts Howard through the third degree, and finally gets an alleged confession from the harassed man. Annie, Howard's wife, declares her belief in her husband's innocence, and calls on Jeffries, Sr. He refuses to help unless she will consent to a divorce. To save Howard she consents, but when she finds that the elder Jeffries does not intend to stand by his son, except financially, she scorns his help. Annie appeals to Judge Brewster, attorney for Jeffries, Sr., to take Howard's case. He declines. It is reported that Annie is going on the stage. The banker and his wife call on Judge Brewster to find some way to prevent it. Annie again pleads with Brewster to defend Howard. He consents. Alicia is greatly alarmed when she learns from Annie that Brewster has taken the case. She confesses to Annie that she called on Underwood the night of his death and that she has his letter in which he threatened suicide, but begs for time before giving out the information. Annie promises Brewster to produce the missing woman at a meeting at his home. Brewster accuses Clinton of forcing a confession from Howard. Annie appears without the witness and refuses to give the name. Alicia arrives.

## CHAPTER XVIII.—Continued.

"It does stun one, doesn't it?" went on Annie. "You can't think when it comes all of a sudden like this. It's just the way I felt the morning they showed me Howard's confession."

"Prison! Prison!" wailed Alicia. Annie tried to console her.

"Not for long," she said soothingly; "you can get bail. It's only a matter of favor—Judge Brewster would get you out right away."

"Get me out!" cried Alicia distractedly. "My God! I can't go to prison! I can't! That's too much. I've done nothing! Look—read this!" Handing over Underwood's letter, she went on: "You can see for yourself. The wretch frightened me into such a state of mind that I hardly knew what I was doing—I went to his rooms to save him. That's the truth, I swear to God! But do you suppose anybody will believe me on oath? They'll—they'll—"

Almost hysterical, she no longer knew what she was saying or doing. She collapsed utterly, and sinking down in a chair, gave way to a passionate fit of sobbing. Annie tried to quiet her.

"Hush!" she said gently, "don't go on like that. Be brave. Perhaps it won't be as bad as you think." She unfolded the letter Alicia had given her and carefully read it through. When she had finished her face lit up with joy. Enthusiastically she cried:

"This is great for Howard! What a blessing you didn't destroy it! What a wretch, what a bound to write you like that! Poor soul, of course, you went and begged him not to do it! I'd have gone myself, but I think I'd have broken an umbrella over his head or something—Gee! these kind of fellows breed trouble, don't they? Alive or dead, they breed trouble! What can we do?"

Alicia rose. Her tears had disappeared. There was a look of fixed resolve in her eyes.

"Howard must be cleared," she said, "and I must face it—alone!"

"You'll be alone all right," said Annie thoughtfully. "Mr. Jeffries will do as much for you as he did for his son."

Noticing that her companion seemed hurt by her frankness, she changed the topic.

"Honest to God!" she exclaimed good-naturedly, "I'm broken-hearted—I'll do anything to save you from this—this public disgrace. I know what it means—I've had my dose of it. But this thing has got to come out, hasn't it?"

The banker's wife wearily nodded assent.

"Yes, I realize that," she said, "but the disgrace of arrest—I can't stand it, Annie! I can't go to prison even if it's only for a minute." Holding out a trembling hand, she went on: "Give me back the letter. I'll leave New York to-night—I'll go to Europe—I'll send it to Judge Brewster from Paris." Looking anxiously into her companion's face, she pleaded: "You'll trust me to do that, won't you? Give it to me, please—you can trust me."

Her hand was still extended, but Annie ignored it.

"No—no," she said, shaking her head, "I can't give it to you—how can

"Do you understand what the letter means to me?"

"Have pity!" cried the banker's wife, almost beside herself. "You can tell them when I'm out of the country. Don't ask me to make this sacrifice now—don't ask me—don't!"

Annie was beginning to lose patience. The woman's selfishness angered her. With irritation, she said: "You've lost your nerve, and you don't know what you're saying. Howard's life comes before you—me—or anybody. You know that!"

"Yes—yes," cried Alicia desperately, "I know that. I'm only asking you to wait. I—I ought to have left this morning—that's what I should have done—gone at once. Now it's too late, unless you help me—"

"I'll help you all I can," replied the other doggedly, "but I've promised Judge Brewster to clear up this matter to-night."

Suddenly there was a commotion at the door. Capt. Clinton entered, followed by Detective Sergeant Maloney. Alicia shrank back in alarm.

"I thought Judge Brewster was here," said the captain, glancing suspiciously round the room.

"I'll send for him," said Annie, touching a bell.

"Well, where's your mysterious witness?" demanded the captain sarcastically.

He looked curiously at Alicia.

"This is Mrs. Howard Jeffries, Sr.," said Annie, "my husband's step-mother."

The captain made a deferential salute. Bully as he was, he knew how

pearance, did I, Maloney. Why not? Because, begging your pardon for doubting your word, there's no such person."

"Begging your pardon for disputing your word, captain," she retorted, mimicking him, "there is such a person."

"Then where is she?" he demanded angrily. Annie made no answer, but looked for advice to Judge Brewster, who at that instant entered the room. The captain glared at her viciously, and unable to longer contain his wrath, he belittled:

"I'll tell you where she is! She's right here in this room!" Pointing his finger at Annie in theatrical fashion, he went on furiously: "Annie Jeffries, you're the woman who visited Underwood the night of his death! I don't hesitate to say so. I've said so all along, haven't I, Maloney?"

"Yes, you told the newspapers so," retorted Annie dryly.

Taking no notice of her remark, the captain blustered:

"I've got your record, young woman! I know all about you and your folks. You knew the two men when they were at college. You knew Underwood before you made the acquaintance of young Jeffries. It was Underwood who introduced you to your husband. It was Underwood who aroused your husband's jealousy. You went to his rooms that night. Your husband followed you there, and the shooting took place!" Turning to Judge Brewster, he added, with a sarcastic grin: "False confession, eh? Hypnotism, eh? I guess it's interna-

lly true."

"The moment she attempts to leave the house," he growled, "I shall arrest her. Good-night, Judge."

"Good-night, captain!" cried Annie mockingly.

"I'll see you later," he muttered. "Come on, Maloney."

The door banged to. They were alone.

"What a sweet disposition!" laughed Annie.

Judge Brewster looked sternly at her. Holding up the letter, he said: "What is the meaning of this? You are not the woman to whom this letter is addressed?"

"No," stammered Annie, "that is—"

The judge interrupted her. Sternly he asked:

"Is it your intention to go on the witness stand and commit perjury?"

"I don't know. I never thought of that," she faltered.

The judge turned to Alicia.

"Are you going to allow her to do so, Mrs. Jeffries?"

"No, no," cried Alicia, quickly; "I never thought of such a thing."

"Then I repeat—is it your intention to perjure yourself?" Annie was silent, and he went on: "I assume it is, but let me ask you: Do you expect me, as your counsel, to become particeps criminis to this tissue of lies? Am I expected to build up a false structure for you to swear to? Am I?"

"I don't know; I haven't thought of it," replied Annie. "If it can be done, why not? I'm glad you suggested it."

"I suggest it!" exclaimed the lawyer, scandalized.

"Yes," cried Annie with growing exaltation; "it never occurred to me till you spoke. Everybody says I'm the woman who called on Robert Underwood that night. Well, that's all right. Let them continue to think so. What difference does it make so long as Howard is set free?" Going toward the door, she said: "Good-night, Mrs. Jeffries!"

The judge tried to bar her way.

"Don't go," he said; "Capt. Clinton's men are waiting outside."

"That doesn't matter!" she cried. "But you must not go!" exclaimed the lawyer in a tone of command. "I won't allow it. They'll arrest you! Mrs. Jeffries, you'll please remain here."

But Annie was already at the door. "I wouldn't keep Capt. Clinton waiting for the world," she cried. "Good-night, Judge Brewster, and God bless you!"

The door slammed, and she was gone.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

He Was Prepared.

Blanche Ring, the actress, is always preaching caution—whether she practices it or not, as Kipling says, another story. "If everyone was only as cautious as a man I once knew," she said the other night, "nobody would ever go broke. He called at the money-order window of the local post-office and asked permission to send an order for \$100 to the 'old country.' Then the man with the money gave his own name as payee.

"I'm going over next week," he volunteered, "and I want to have the money waiting for me on the other side, so that I can give it to my mother."

"Why don't you take it with you?" asked the clerk. "You would save 40 cents."

"Well, suppose the ship sinks and I drown?"—Young's Magazine.



"Howard's Life Comes Before You—Me—or Anybody."

to be courteous when it suited his purpose. He had heard enough of the wealthy banker's aristocratic wife to treat her with respect.

"Beg pardon, m'm; I wanted to tell the judge I was going."

The servant entered.

"Tell Judge Brewster that Capt. Clinton is going," said Annie.

Alicia, meantime, was once more on the verge of collapse. The long threatened exposure was now at hand. In another moment the judge and perhaps her husband would come in, and Annie would hand them the letter which exculpated her husband. There was a moment of terrible suspense. Annie stood aloof, her eyes fixed on the floor. Suddenly, without uttering a word, she drew Underwood's letter from her bosom, and quickly approaching Alicia, placed it unnoticed in her hand. The banker's wife flushed and then turned pale. She understood. Annie would spare her. Her lips parted to protest. Even she had insisted back by such an exhibition of unselfishness as this. She began to stammer thanks.

"No, no," whispered Annie quickly, "don't thank me; keep it."

Capt. Clinton turned round with a leer. Insolently, he said to Annie:

"You might as well own up—you've played a trick on us all."

"No, Capt. Clinton," she replied with quiet dignity; "I told you the simple truth. Naturally you don't believe it."

"The simple truth may do for Judge Brewster," grinned the policeman, "but it won't do for me. I never expected this mysterious witness, who was going to prove that Underwood committed suicide, to make an ap-

proach to me."

"You don't say so?" exclaimed Annie, irritated at the man's intolerable insolence.

Judge Brewster held up a restraining hand.

"Please say nothing," he said with dignity.

"No, I guess I'll let him talk. Go on, captain," she said with a smile, as if thoroughly enjoying the situation.

Alicia came forward, her face pale, but on it a look of determination, as if she had quite made up her mind as to what course to pursue. In her hand was Underwood's letter. Addressing Annie, she said, with emotion:

"The truth must come out sooner or later."

Seeing what she was about to do, Annie quickly put out her hand to stop her. She expected the banker's wife to do her duty, she had insisted that she must, but now she was ready to do it, she realized what it was costing her. Her position, her future happiness were at stake. It was too great a sacrifice. Perhaps there was some other way.

"No, no, not yet," she whispered. But Alicia brushed her aside and, thrusting the letter into the hand of the astonished police captain, she said:

"Yes, now! Read that, captain!"

Capt. Clinton slowly unfolded the letter. Alicia collapsed in a chair. Annie stood by helpless, but trying to collect her wits. The judge watched the scene with amazement, not understanding. The captain read from the letter:

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