

The THIRD DEGREE

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AND
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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, a 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 tries to get work and fails. A former college chum makes a business proposition to Howard which requires \$2,000 cash, and Howard is broke. Robert Underwood, who had been repulsed by Howard's wife, Annie, in his college days, and had once been engaged to Alicia, Howard's stepmother, has apartments at the Astoria and is apparently in prosperous circumstances. Howard recalls a \$250 loan to Underwood that remains unpaid, and decides to ask him for the \$2,000 he needs.

CHAPTER III.

The handsome townhouse of Howard Jeffries, the well-known banker, on Riverside drive, was one of the most striking among the many imposing millionaire homes that line the city's splendid water front. Houses there were in the immediate proximity which were more showy and had cost more money, but none as completely satisfying from the art lover's standpoint. It was the home of a man who studied and loved the beautiful for its own sake and not because he wanted to astonish people with what miracles his money could work. Occupying a large plot on slightly elevated ground, the house commanded a fine view of the broad Hudson. Directly opposite, across the river, busy with steam and sailing craft, smiled the green slopes of New Jersey; in the purple north frowned the jagged cliffs of the precipitous Palisades.

The elder Jeffries, aristocratic descendant of an old Knickerbocker family, was proud of his home and had spent large sums of money in beautifying it. Built in colonial style of pure white marble with long French windows and lofty columns supporting a flat, rounded roof, surrounded by broad lawns, wide-spreading shade trees and splashing fountains, it was a conspicuous landmark for miles. The interior was full of architectural beauty. The stately entrance hall, hung with ancestral portraits, was of noble proportions, and a superb staircase, decorated with statuary, led off to tastefully decorated reception rooms above. To-night the house was brilliantly illuminated and there was considerable activity at the front entrance, where a footman in smart livery stood opening the doors of the carriages as they drove up in quick succession.

Mrs. Jeffries' musicales were always largely attended because she knew the secret of making them interesting. Her husband's wealth and her fine house enabled her to entertain on a liberal scale, and she was a tactful and diplomatic hostess as well. She not only cultivated the right kind of people who were congenial to each other, but she always managed to have some guest of special distinction whom every one was eager to meet. Her own wide acquaintance among the prominent operatic artists and her husband's influential position in the world of finance made this policy an easy way of furthering her social ambitions. She would always invite some one whom she could present as the lion of the evening. One week it would be a tenor from the opera house, another time a famous violinist. In this way she managed to create a little artistic salon on the lines of the famous political salons in which the brilliant women of the eighteenth century molded public opinion in France.

Alicia knew she was clever and as she stood admiring herself in front of a full length mirror while awaiting the arrival of her guests she congratulated herself that she had made a success of her life. She had won those things which most women hold dear—wealth and social position. She had married a man she did not love, it was true, but other women had done that before her. If she had not brought her husband love she at least was not a wife he need be ashamed of. In her Paquin gown of gold cloth, with sweeping train and a jeweled tiara in her hair, she considered herself handsome enough to grace any man's home. It was indeed a beauty which she saw in the mirror—the face of a woman not yet 30, with the features regular and refined. The eyes were large and dark and the mouth and nose delicately molded. The face seemed academically perfect, all but the expression. She had a cold, calculating look, and a cynic might have charged her with being heartless, of stopping at nothing to gain her own ends.

To-night Alicia had every reason to feel jubilant. She had secured a social lion that all New York would talk about—no less a person than Dr. Bernstein, the celebrated psychologist, the originator of the theory of scientific psychology. Everything seemed to go the way she wished; her musicales were the talk of the town; her husband had just presented her with the jeweled tiara which now graced her head; there seemed to be nothing in the world that she could not enjoy.

Yet she was not happy, and as she gazed at the face reflected before her in the glass she wondered if the world

guessed how unhappy she was. She knew that by her own indiscretion she was in danger of losing all she had won, her position in society, her place in the affections of her husband, everything.

When she married Mr. Jeffries it was with deliberate calculation. She did not love him, but, being ambitious, she did not hesitate to deceive him. He was rich, he could give her that prominent position in society for which she yearned. The fact that she was already engaged to a man for whom she did care did not deter her for a moment from her set purpose. She had met Robert Underwood years before. He was then a college boy, tall, handsome, clever. She fell in love with him and they became engaged. As she grew more sophisticated she saw the folly of their youthful infatuation. Underwood was without fortune, his future uncertain. While in this uncertain state of mind she met Mr. Jeffries, then a widower, at a reception. The banker was attracted to her and being a business man he did things quickly. He proposed and was accepted, all in the brief time of five minutes. Robert Underwood and the romance of her girlhood were sacrificed without question when it came to reaching a prompt decision. She wrote Underwood a brief letter of farewell, telling him that the action she had taken was really for the best interests of them both. Underwood made no reply and for months did not attempt to go near her. Then he met her in public. There was a reconciliation. He exerted the old spell—on the married woman. Cold and indifferent to her husband, Alicia found it amusing to have her old lover paying her court and the danger of discovery only

These thoughts were responsible for the frown on the beautiful Mrs. Jeffries' bejeweled brow that particular Saturday evening. Alicia gave a sigh and was drawing on her long kid gloves before the glass, when suddenly a maid entered and tendered her mistress a note. Alicia knew the handwriting only too well. She tore the letter open and read:

Dear Mrs. Jeffries: I received your letter telling me that my presence at your house to-night would be distasteful to you. As you can imagine, it was a great shock. Don't you understand the harm this will do me? Everybody will notice my absence. They will jump to the conclusion that there has been a rupture, and my credit will suffer immediately with your friends. I cannot afford to let this happen now. My affairs are in such condition that it will be fatal to me. I need your support and friendship more than ever. I have noticed for some time



She at Least Was Not a Wife He Need Be Ashamed Of.

gave the intrigue additional zest and charm. She did not lead Underwood to believe that he could induce her to forget her duty to Mr. Jeffries, but she was foolish enough to encourage a dangerous intimacy. She thought she was strong enough to be able to call a halt whenever she would be so disposed, but as is often the case she overestimated her powers. The intimacy grew. Underwood became bolder, claiming and obtaining special privileges. He soon realized that he had the upper hand and he traded on it. Under her patronage he was invited everywhere. He practically lived on her friends. He borrowed their money and cheated them at cards. His real character was soon known to all, but no one dared expose him for fear of offending the influential Mrs. Jeffries. Realizing this, Underwood continued his deceptions until he became a sort of social highwayman. He had no legitimate source of income, but he took a suite of apartments at the expensive Astoria and on credit furnished them so gorgeously that they became the talk of the town. The magazines and newspapers devoted columns to the magnificence of their furnishings and the art treasures they contained. Art dealers all over the country offered him liberal commissions if he would dispose of expensive objects of art to his friends. He entered in business relation with several firms and soon his rooms became a veritable bazaar for art curios of all kinds. Mrs. Jeffries' friends paid exorbitant prices for some of the stuff and Underwood

that your manner to me has changed. Perhaps you have believed some of the stories my enemies have circulated about me. For the sake of our old friendship, Alicia, don't desert me now. Remember what I once was to you and let me come to your reception to-night. There is a reason why I must be seen in your house. Yours devotedly,
ROBERT UNDERWOOD.

Alicia's face flushed with anger. Turning to the maid, she said: "There's no answer." The girl was about to close the door when her mistress suddenly recalled her. "Wait a minute," she said; "I'll write a line." Taking from her dainty escritoire a sheet of perfumed notepaper, she wrote hurriedly as follows: "If you dare to come near my house to-night I will have you put out by the servants." Quickly folding the note, she crushed it into an envelope, sealed it, handed it to the girl, and said: "Give that to the messenger." The servant disappeared and Alicia resumed her work of drawing on her gloves in front of her mirror. How dare he write her such a letter? Was her house to be made the headquarters for his swindling schemes? Did he want to cheat more of her friends? The more she thought of all he had done, the angrier she became. Her eyes flashed and her bosom heaved with indignation. She wondered what her husband, the soul of honor, would say if he suspected that she had permitted a man of Underwood's character to use his home for his dishonest practices. She was glad she

had ended it now, before it was too late. There might have been a scandal, and that she must avoid at any cost. Mr. Jeffries, she felt certain, would not tolerate a scandal of any kind.

All at once she felt something brush her cheek. She turned quickly. It was her husband who had entered the room quietly. "Oh, Howard," she exclaimed, peevishly; "how you frightened me! You shouldn't startle me like that."

A tall, distinguished-looking man with white mustache and pointed beard stood admiring her in silence. His erect figure, admirably set off in a well-cut dress coat suggested the soldier. "What are you doing alone here, dear?" he said. "I hear carriages outside. Our guests are arriving."

"Just thinking, that's all," she replied, evasively. He noticed her preoccupied look and, with some concern, he demanded: "There's nothing to worry you, is there?"

"Oh, no—nothing like that," she said, hastily. He looked at her closely and she averted her eyes. Mr. Jeffries often wondered if he had made a mistake. He felt that this woman to whom he had given his name did not love him, but his vanity as much as his pride prevented him from acknowledging it, even to himself. After all, what did he care? She was a companion, she graced his home and looked after his creature comforts. Perhaps no reasonable man should expect anything more. Carelessly, he asked: "Whom do you expect to-night?"

"Oh, the usual crowd," replied Alicia, languidly. "Dr. Bernstein is coming—you know he's quite the rage just now. He has to do with psychology and all that sort of thing."

"So, he's your lion to-night, is he?" smiled the banker. Then he went on: "By the by, I met Brewster at the club to-night. He promised to drop in."

Now it was Alicia's turn to smile. It was not everybody who could boast of having such a distinguished lawyer as Judge Brewster on their calling lists. To-night would certainly be a success—two lions instead of one. For the moment she forgot her worry. "I am delighted that the judge is coming," she exclaimed, her face beaming. "Every one is talking about him since his brilliant speech for the defense in that murder case."

The banker noted his wife's beautiful hair and the white transparency of her skin. His gaze lingered on the graceful lines of her neck and bosom, glittering with precious stones. An exquisite aroma exuding from her person reached where he stood. His eyes grew more ardent and, passing his arm affectionately around her slender waist, he asked: "How does my little girl like her tiara?"

"It's very nice. Don't you see I'm wearing it to-night?" she replied almost impatiently and drawing herself away.

Before Mr. Jeffries had time to reply there was a commotion at the other end of the reception room, where rich tapestries screened off the main entrance hall. The butler drew the curtains aside.

"Mr. and Mrs. Cortwright," he announced loudly. Alicia went forward, followed by her husband, to greet her guests. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

DANGER IN LICKING STAMPS

Practice Has Been Known to Cause Acute Inflammation of the Tongue.

Do the people who jeer at the cautious ones who refuse to lick a postage stamp as "cranks" know that there is a defined disease known as "the postage stamp tongue?"

This is an acute inflammation of the tongue, directly traced to the germs to be found on the gummed side of stamp or envelope.

Other and more serious diseases have been caused by this habit that is so universal and seems so harmless.

One throat specialist in a hospital declares that many chronic affections of the throat are found among persons who have as their livelihood the addressing and stamping of envelopes.

Bad skin diseases have been known to follow this habit, and it has even caused pulmonary troubles.

It is after all but a habit, and a bad one. It takes no more time and is quite as easy to moisten the stamp with a damp sponge or rag.

Where many letters must be stamped and sealed there are good patent inventions by which the sponge is kept moist.

Hanging on the Wall.

"The way pictures are hung makes such a lot of difference in the appearance of a room," said an interior decorator a few days ago. "That fact is thrust upon me nearly every day. I go into some parlors where the pictures are hung so high that all perspective is lost, and the ceiling seems to be hopelessly high. Other folks hang theirs so low that it hurts your spine to look at them, in addition to straining your eyes, spoiling the beauty of the room and taking from the value of the picture."

"All pictures should not be hung on the same level, as they so often are, yet all should be as nearly on the level with the eyes as possible. If square and oblong pictures are alternated irregularly with round and oval ones the best possible effect is gained."

Accounting for it. Art Lover (standing before "The Bath")—"Did you ever see such color?"

Philistine—"No wonder. You must remember that the lady ain't through washing herself yet."—Judge.

EXCELLENT GRAIN FIELDS IN WESTERN CANADA

YIELDS OF WHEAT AS HIGH AS 64 BUSHELS PER ACRE.

Now that we have entered upon the making of a new year, it is natural to look back over the past one, for the purpose of ascertaining what has been done. The business man and the farmer have taken stock, and both, if they are keen in business detail and interest, know exactly their financial position. The farmer of Western Canada is generally a business man, and in his stock-taking he will have found that he has had a successful year. On looking over a number of reports sent from various quarters, the writer finds that in spite of the visitation of drouth in a small portion of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, many farmers are able to report splendid crops. And these reports come from different sections, covering an area of about 25,000 square miles. As, for instance, at Laird, Saskatchewan, the crop returns showed that J. B. Peters had 12,800 bushels from 320 acres, or nearly 40 bushels to the acre. In the Blaine Lake district the fields ranged from 15 to 50 bushels per acre, Ben Crews having 1,150 bushels from 24 acres; Edmond Trotter 1,200 bushels off 30 acres, while fields of 30 bushels were common. On poorly cultivated fields but 15 bushels were reported.

In Foam Lake (Sask.) district 100 bushels of oats to the acre were secured by Angus Robertson, D. McRae and C. H. Hart, while the average was 85. In wheat 30 bushels to the acre were quite common on the newer land, but off 15 acres of land cultivated for the past three years George E. Wood secured 495 bushels. Mr. James Traynor, near Regina (Sask.) is still on the shady side of thirty. He had 50,000 bushels of grain last year, half of which was wheat. Its market value was \$25,000. He says he is well satisfied.

Arthur Somers of Strathclair threshed 100 acres, averaging 25 bushels to the acre. Thomas Foreman, of Milestone, threshed 11,000 bushels of wheat, and 3,000 bushels of flax off 600 acres of land. W. Weatherstone, of Strathclair, threshed 5,000 bushels of oats from 96 acres. John Gonzilla, of Gillies, about twenty-five miles west of Rosthern, Sask., had 180 bushels from 3 acres of wheat. Mr. Gonzilla's general average of crop was over 40 bushels to the acre. Ben Cruise, a neighbor, averaged 45 bushels to the acre from 23 acres. W. A. Rose, of the Walderheim district, threshed 6,000 bushels of wheat from 240 acres, an average of 25 bushels, 100 acres was on summer fallow and averaged 33 bushels. He had also an average of 69 bushels of oats to the acre on a 50-acre field. Wm. Lehman, who has a farm close to Rosthern, had an average of 27 bushels to the acre on 60 acres of summer fallow. Mr. Midsky, of Rapid City (Man.) threshed 1,000 bushels of oats from 7 acres.

The yield of the different varieties of wheat per acre at the Experimental Farm, Brandon, was: Red Fife, 23 bushels; White Fife, 34 bushels; Preston, 32 bushels; early Red Fife, 27 bushels. The crops at the C. P. R. demonstration farms at Strathmore (Alberta) proved up to expectations, the Swedish variety oats yielding 110 bushels to the acre. At the farm two rowed barley went 48½ bushels to the acre. Yields of from 50 bushels to 100 bushels of oats to the acre were quite common in the Sturgeon River Settlement near Edmonton (Alberta). But last year was uncommonly good and the hundred mark was passed. Wm. Craig had a yield of oats from a measured plot, which gave 107 bushels and 20 lbs. per acre.

Albert Teskey, of Olds (Alberta) threshed a 100-acre field which yielded 101 bushels of oats per acre, and Joseph McCartney had a large field equally good. At Cupar (Sask.) oats threshed 80 bushels to the acre. On the Traquairs farm at Cupar, a five-acre plot of Marquis wheat yielded 54 bushels to the acre, while Laurence Barkin had 37 bushels of Red Fife to the acre. At Wordsworth, Reeder Bros.' wheat averaged 33½ bushels to the acre, and W. McMullan's 32. William Kraft of Alix (Alberta) threshed 1,042 bushels of winter wheat off 19½ acres, or about 53 bushels to the acre. John Laycraft of Dinton, near High River, Alberta, had over 1,100 bushels of spring wheat from 50 acres.

E. F. Knipe, near Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, had 800 bushels of wheat from 20 acres. W. Metcalf had over 31 bushels to the acre, while S. Henderson, who was hailed badly, had an average return of 32 bushels of wheat to the acre. McWhirter Bros. and John McBain, of Redvers, Saskatchewan, had 25 bushels of wheat to the acre. John Kennedy, east of the Horse Mills district near Edmonton, from 40 acres of spring wheat got 1,767 bushels, or 44 bushels to the acre.

J. E. Vanderburgh, near Dayslaw, Alberta, threshed four thousand bushels of wheat from 120 acres. Mr. D'Arcy, near there, threshed ten thousand and fifty-eight bushels (machine measure) of wheat from five hundred acres, and out of this only sixty acres was new land.

At Fleming, Sask., a Winter's wheat averaged 39 bushels to the acre and several others report heavy yields. Mr. Winter's crop was not on summer fallow, but on a piece of land broken in 1882 and said to be the first broken in the Fleming district.

The agent of the Canadian govern-

ment will be pleased to give information regarding the various districts in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, where free homesteads of 160 acres are available.

NO CHANCE.



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