

THE ROOT OF EVIL

BY THOMAS DIXON



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"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. Bivens says he would make you a millionaire in five years. You're only twenty-six now."

"That's very kind of Mr. Bivens, I'm sure. When I need his patronage I'll take my place 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.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Bivens Calls.

STUART waked next morning with a sense of hopeless depression. What strange madness had come over the woman he loved? They had never discussed money before. Bivens was the only explanation.

A letter was on the hall rack which had been sent by a messenger. He broke the seal with nervous haste. It was from Bivens asking him to call his office telephone at 11 o'clock.

He tore the note into tiny pieces, stepped into the parlor and threw them into the grate. Some one was playing an old fashioned southern melody, and the tenderest voice accompanied the piano. He walked to the door of the music room.

It was Harriet Woodman. She looked up with a start.

"Oh, Jim, I didn't know you were here!"

"It was beautiful, little pal."

"Yes, I knew you'd like that piece. I heard you humming it one day. That's why I got it."

"What a sweet voice you have, child, so clear, so deep and rich and full of feeling. I didn't know you could sing."

"I didn't either until I tried."

"You must study music," he said, with enthusiasm.

The girl clapped her hands and leaped to her feet, exclaiming:

"Will you be proud of me, Jim, if I can sing?"

"Indeed I will," was the earnest answer.

The laughing eyes grew serious as she slowly said:

"Then I'll do my level best. I'm off to-day."

On reaching his office on lower Broadway Stuart rang Bivens' telephone, and as president of the American Chemical company made an engagement to call at once.

Stuart was grateful for the timely call of a client who kept him in consultation for fifteen minutes while Bivens patiently waited his turn in the reception room.

The first view of Bivens was always impressive. He was short, thin and looked almost frail at first glance. A cold look gave the impression of a reserve force in his compact frame. His hair was jet black and falling slightly on top, which gave in the appearance of much greater

word is law with me. Tell me, do you think I've got a chance with a girl like that? You know I've never gone with girls much. I'm timid and awkward. I don't know what to do or what to say. But my money will help, won't it?"

"Money always helps in this town, Cal."

"And it means so much to a woman, too, don't it?"

"Yes. Have you said anything to Miss Nan yet?"

"Lord, no! Haven't dared. I'm kinder shying up to the old lady to get her on my side. She seems awfully friendly. I think she likes me. Don't you think it a good plan to cultivate her?"

"By all means," was the dry reply.

"Say, Jim, help me. Take this attorneyship. It will please her and I'll make you rich. Come in with me and you'll never regret it. I know my folks were not your social equals in the old days down south. But you know as well as I do that money talks here."

There was no mistaking the genuineness of Bivens' feelings. Stuart had but to accept the generous offer made

age than he could really claim. His thin features were regular, and his face was covered with a thick black beard which he kept trimmed to a keen point on the chin. His most striking features were a high massive forehead, abnormally long for the size of his body, and a pair of piercing, bead-like black eyes.

He rarely spoke except to a purpose, and his manners were quiet, almost furtive. He had thus early in his career gained a nickname that was peculiarly significant in Wall street. He was known as the Wessel.

His whole makeup, physical and mental, was curiously complex, a mixture of sobriety and greed, piety and cruelty, tenderness and indomitable will, simplicity of tastes with boundless ambition.

His friendship for Stuart and his deference to him personally and socially dated from their boyhood in North Carolina, and particularly from an incident which occurred in their college days. Bivens' father had been a notorious coward in the Confederate army and had at last deserted the service. On Bivens' arrival at college, a particularly green freshman, Stuart had discovered a group of his classmates hazing him. They had forced the coward's son to mount a box and repeat to the crowd the funny stories about the "valor" of his father. The boy, scared half out of his wits, stood stammering and perspiring and choking with shame as he tried to obey his tormentors.

Stuart protested vigorously, and a fight ensued in which he was compelled to thrash the ringleader and rescue the victim by force of arms. From that day Stuart was Bivens' bean meal of a gentleman. He had tolerated rather than enjoyed this friendship.

Bivens shook hands quietly and took a seat beside Stuart's desk.

"Well," said the lawyer at length.

"I've come to make you an important proposition, Jim. We need another attorney. The business of the company is increasing so rapidly our force can't handle it. I need a big man close to me. If you'll take the place I'll give you a salary that will ultimately be as big as the president gets in the White House. Twenty thousand to start with."

Stuart looked at his visitor curiously.

"Why do you want me, Cal? There are thousands of lawyers here who would jump at the chance. Many of them are better equipped than I."

"Because I know that you won't lie to me, you won't swindle or take advantage of me."

"Why not?" Stuart asked, with a smile.

"Because it's not in you."

"I see. You want to capitalize my character and use me to amuse the other fellow?"

"That's one way to look at it—yes."

"But that's not the real reason you come to me today with this proposition, is it?"

"Not the only one. You know my friendship for you is genuine. You know there's not a man in New York for whom I'd do as much as I will for you if you'll let me. Isn't that true?"

"I believe it—yes. And yet there must be another reason. You're not afraid of Woodman and wish to reach him through me?"

The ghost of a smile flitted around the shining little black eyes.

"Afraid?" he asked contemptuously.

"I'm not even interested in him. The old fossil's a joke. He thinks he can stop the progress of the world to attend a case of measles in Mott street."

Stuart was silent a moment, watching the dark masked face before him. At last he blurted out:

"Well, Cal, what's the real reason you make me this offer today?"

"You can keep a little secret?"

"You ought to know that before making me such an offer."

"Yes—yes, of course. I know you will." Bivens paused and resumed his cigar. "The fact is—Jim—I'm in love."

"But where do I come into this affair?"

"Simple enough. The Primroses—"

"Oh, it's Miss Primrose?"

"Yes—Miss Nan. You see, they think all of a client who kept him in consultation for fifteen minutes while Bivens patiently waited his turn in the reception room.

The first view of Bivens was always impressive. He was short, thin and looked almost frail at first glance. A cold look gave the impression of a reserve force in his compact frame. His hair was jet black and falling slightly on top, which gave in the appearance of much greater



"Think it over. I'll see you again!"

in good faith, and every cloud between him and Nan would vanish! They could be married at once and the future was secure. All he had to do was to keep silent for the moment as to his real relations to Nan and compromise his sense of honor by accepting the wages of a man whose principles he despised. His decision was made with out a moment's hesitation.

"I refuse the offer, Cal," he said firmly.

Bivens rose quickly and placed his smooth hand on his friend's.

"I won't take that answer now. Think it over. I'll see you again."

He turned and left the room before Stuart could reply.

The lawyer drew a photograph from his desk and looked at it, smiling tenderly.

"I wonder, Nan! I wonder!"

The smile slowly faded, and a frown clouded his brow. The lines of his mouth suddenly tightened.

"I'll settle it today," he said with decision, as he rose, took his hat and left for Gramercy park.

It was noon when Stuart reached the Primrose house, and Nan was again out. He received the announcement from her mother with a feeling of rage he could ill conceal.

"Where is she? I seem never to be able to find her at home."

"Now, don't be absurd, Jim. You know she would have broken any engagement to see you had she known you were going to call today. I don't expect her home until 7."

"Of course, I understand, Mrs. Primrose," Stuart said with a light laugh.

"I should have told her, but I didn't know until a few moments ago that I was coming."

"Nothing serious has happened, I hope?" she asked, with carefully modulated sympathy, which said plainly that she hoped for the worst.

"No. Just say that I'll call after dinner."

"All right, Jim, dear," the mother purred. "I'll see that she's here if I have to lock the door."

Stuart strolled out aimlessly and began to ramble without purpose. Somehow today everything on which his eye rested and every sound that struck his ear proclaimed the advent of the trust's new power of which Bivens was the symbol—Bivens with his delicate, careful little hand, his bulging forehead, his dark keen eyes. What chance had his old friend Woodman against such forces?

That Bivens should fall hopelessly and blindly in love with Nan at first sight was too stupefying to be grasped at once. She couldn't love such a man—and yet his millions and that slippery mother were a sinister combination.

By evening he had thrown off his depression and met Nan with something of his old gaiety, to which she responded with a touch of coquetry.

"Tell me, Jim," she began with a smile of mischief in her eyes, "why you called at the remarkable hour of 12 noon today? Am I becoming so restless that work no longer has any charms? You must have something very important to say?"

"Yes, I have, Nan," he answered soberly, taking her hand. "I want a public announcement of our engagement in tomorrow morning's papers."

"But why? You know the one concession, the only one I have ever made

to my mother's hostility to you; in that our engagement shall be kept secret until we are ready to marry. We must play fair."

"I will. We are ready now."

Nan's voice broke into a ripple of laughter.

"Oh, are we? I didn't know it!"

"Yes, that's what I came to tell you," Stuart went on, catching her spirit of fun and pressing her hand.

"I've arranged a little trip to the country tomorrow, and I'm going to convince you before we return. Make the announcement tonight, dear! On my honor I promise to convince you tomorrow that we are ready. I've an argument that never fails—an argument no woman can resist."

"Not tonight, Jim," was the laughing reply.

"Can't you trust me when I tell you that I've discovered something today that makes it necessary? I have seen Mr. Bivens."

Nan leaped to her feet, her face flushed, her voice ringing with triumph.

"And you did what I asked you. Oh, you're a darling! Why did you tease me so last night? You accepted his offer?"

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, dear, but I did not."

The girl dropped into her seat, with a sigh, while he went on:

"Bivens further confided in me the fact that he is hopelessly and desperately in love with you."

A flash of anger mantled Nan's cheeks.

"That will do, Jim," she said in quiet cold tones. "Your joke has gone far enough."

"Joke! Do you think I could joke on such a subject?"

A smile began to play about the corners of the full lips.

"I never dreamed he was so easy."

Still smiling dreamily Nan crossed her hands over her knees and studied the pattern in the rug, ignoring the presence of her lover.

"Let's not joke, Nan. It's too serious."

"Serious! I fail to see it."

"Can't you see that we must at once announce our engagement?"

The girl's lips curled with the faintest suggestion of sarcasm.

"I don't see it at all. You may be a good lawyer, but I fall to follow your logic."

Stuart rose, with a gesture of anger.

"Come to the point, Nan. Let's not beat the devil around the stump any longer. You know as well as I do that you've been trying to flirt with this little insect. You know in your heart of hearts you despise Bivens."

"On the contrary, I vastly admire him. The man who can enter with his hand in this big, heartless city and successfully smash the giants who oppose him is not an insect. I'd rather call him a hero. All women admire success."

"It's disgusting!"

Nan fixed her dark eyes on Stuart.

"How dare you use such a word to me?"

"Because it's true, and you know it."

"True or false, you can't say it"—she rose deliberately—"you may go now."

"Forgive me, dear," Stuart stammered in a queer, muffled voice. "I didn't mean to hurt you. I was mad with jealousy."

"You may go," was the hard, even answer.

"I can't go like this, dearest," he pleaded. "You must forgive me—you must! Look at me!"

She turned slowly, stared him full in the face for a moment without the quiver of an eyelid, her fine figure tense, erect, cold, as she quietly said:

"You are tiring me, Jim."

For the first time he saw a cold blooded calculation behind her beautiful eyes and felt it in the smile which showed the white teeth—the smile of a woman who would pause at nothing to get what she wanted.

A blush of shame tinged his face as he tremblingly said:

"Please, dear, let's not part like this! I've suffered enough today. You're only teasing me. And I've acted like a fool. Say that you forgive me!"

"Our engagement is at an end, Mr. Stuart," was the quiet answer.

"Nan!"

Before he could recover from the shock or utter a protest she opened the door and he had passed out into the night.

CHAPTER IV.

The Forgotten Man.

THE next day Stuart called a messenger and sent a note to Nan asking her to forget the ugly memory of the night before and fulfill her promise to go to the country when the rain ceased. If it continued to rain he would call at 8. He told the boy to wait for an answer. The messenger returned promptly and handed back his note unopened.

Of course she was bluffing. She knew she had the whip hand for the moment and meant to use it.

"Well, two can play this game," he muttered. "We'll see who wins!"

He turned to his work with grim resolution.

For two weeks the battle between pride and love raged in silence. Each day he rose with the hope of some sign from Nan, and each day he hoped in a more desperate and sullen despair. At last he began to question the wisdom of his course. Should he not fight his battle at closer range? What if he were in reality engaged in a mortal combat with Bivens' millions? Was too hideous to be thinkable.

And yet the more he thought of the scene of their parting, the more sickening became the conviction that her anger at his use of an ugly word was merely a subterfuge to break their engagement. The perfidy and cruelty of such an act was too hideous for belief

—yet if the thing were possible!

One evening he made up his mind to go at once and fight for his old place beside her on any terms she would grant. He seized his hat and opened the door. To his amazement Bivens was leisurely ascending the steps. Stuart stepped into the parlor and sat down with resignation to await his entrance.

To his amazement he heard the maid say:

"This way, sir. Dr. Woodman asks you to wait for him in the library."

So Bivens was calling on his arch enemy by appointment. Stuart replaced his hat on the rack and returned to his room, determined to await the outcome of this extraordinary visit.

On Dr. Woodman's entrance Bivens rose to greet him with unusual animation and unmistakable good will. When the doctor grasped the outstretched hand a more striking contrast could scarcely be imagined—the one big, bluff, jovial, sunny, powerful and straight of figure as he was always straight in speech and manners, the financier small and weak in body, his movements sinuous, flexible, with eyes that never looked at the man he was talking to, yet always seemed to be taking in everything in the room.

"Well, Bivens, what can I do for you? I understand from your note that the matter is important."

"Of the gravest importance to us both, doctor," he answered, with a smile. "For a peculiar personal reason I want us to get together and settle our differences."

"Are there any differences between us? You go your way, and I go mine. You run your business to suit yourself, and I'll do the same. The world's big enough for us both."

"That's just the trouble," Bivens interrupted. "It isn't. We are entering a new era of combination, merger, co-operation."

"Compulsory co-operation!" the doctor laughed.

"It may be so at last," the little man said soberly. "Certainly the old idea of competition is played out. We no longer believe that business men should try to cut each other's throats."

"Oh, I see," sneered the doctor. "They should get together, corral their customers and cut their throats."

"You must recognize the fact that the drug trade is a business enterprise, not a charity organization."

"Even so, still I happen to know that within a stone's throw of my store swarms a population of a quarter of a million human beings so poor that only 300 of them ever have access to a bathroom. You ask me to enter with you into a criminal conspiracy to suppress freedom of trade and use fraud and violence if necessary to win?"

"Fraud and violence?" Bivens interrupted, smilingly.

"Certainly. What sort of merchandise does the 'organizer' of modern industry bring to market? Tricks and subterfuges in the form of printed paper called stocks, which represent no value. From the moment a financier once tastes this blood he becomes a beast."

"Come, come, doctor, you must realize the fact that in the drug business we are bringing order out of chaos and at last putting the trade on a paying basis."

"But at what price! You have closed mills instead of opening them, thrown out of work thousands, lowered the price paid for raw material, bringing ruin to its producers, increased the price charged for your products to the ruin of the consumer, and saddled millions of fictitious debts on the backs of their children yet unborn. The price of living has been increasing steadily with the organization of each industry into a trust. Where will it end?"

Bivens' eyes narrowed to the merest points of concentrated light, while an amused smile played about them.

"The trust is here to stay, doctor. Legislation against it is as absurd and futile as a movement to stop the tides. You cannot make economy a crime, progress a misdemeanor, or efficiency a felony! If so, you can destroy the trusts."

(Continued in Tuesday's Issue.)

SHERIFF'S SALE OF VALUABLE REAL ESTATE.—By virtue of process issued out of the Court of Common Pleas of Wayne county, and State of Pennsylvania, and to me directed and delivered, I have levied on and will expose to public sale, at the Court House in Honesdale, on

THURSDAY, MAY 29, AT 2 P. M.

All the defendant's right, title, and interest in the following described property—viz:

All those three certain lots or parcels of land situate in the township of Damascus, county of Wayne and state of Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows, to wit:

The first, beginning in the north line of land conveyed to Z. & P. Wilcox at a heap of stones southwest corner of lands conveyed to Z. & P. Wilcox; thence south seventy-seven degrees west eighty-four and seven-tenths rods to a corner; thence north one hundred six and one-half rods to a stone corner; thence east eighty-two and one-half rods to a corner; and thence south eighty-seven and one-half rods to the place of beginning. Containing fifty acres being the same more or less. Being the same land which Samuel H. Skinner by deed dated May 7, 1904, and recorded in Wayne County in D. B., No. 92, page 464, granted and conveyed to John G. Skinner.

The second—Beginning at a heap of stones the south-western corner of land conveyed by F. Stewardson and L. Smith to E. B. Keesler; thence by lands formerly of Nathan Mitchell north eighty degrees west thirty-two rods to a hemlock corner; thence by lands formerly of Z. & P. Wilcox south seventy-seven degrees west seventy-three degrees west seventy-three and one-half rods to a stone corner; thence by land formerly of John Torrey north eighty-seven and one-half rods to stone corner; thence east one hundred and three and one-tenth rods to stone corner in the western line of land formerly of E. B. Keesler; thence along said line south seventy-six and six-tenths rods to the place of beginning. Containing fifty acres being the same more or less.

The third—Beginning at a stake and stones at the south-east corner of Jesse O. Mosier's lot, thence east of thirty-eight and one-tenth rods to a stake and stones; thence north one hundred and five rods to a stake and stones on a level spot of ground about two rods west of a ledge of rocks; thence west thirty-eight and one-tenth rods to a stake and stones and thence south one hundred and five rods to the place of beginning. Containing twenty-five acres of land being the same more or less. The second and third piece above described being same land which Della C. Haynes by deed dated July 3, 1906, and recorded in Wayne County in Deed Book No. 96, page 210, granted and conveyed to John G. Skinner.

On said premises is a house and two barns.

Seized and taken in execution as the property of John G. Skinner, at the suit of Daniel L. Brown, No. 31, June Term, 1911. Judgment, \$1,125. Attorneys, Kimble & Hanlan.

TAKE NOTICE.—All bids and costs must be paid on day of sale or deeds will not be acknowledged.

FRANK C. KIMBLE, Sheriff.

SHERIFF'S SALE OF VALUABLE REAL ESTATE.—By virtue of process issued out of the Court of Common Pleas of Wayne county, and State of Pennsylvania, and to me directed and delivered, I have levied on and will expose to public sale, at the Court House in Honesdale on

FRIDAY, JUNE 6, 2 P. M.

All the defendant's right, title and interest in the following described property—viz:

All that certain piece, parcel or tract of land, situate in the Township of Manchester, county of Wayne, and State of Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows:

BEGINNING for a corner at the northeasterly corner of land belonging to E. K. Barnes, and commonly called the Cole Flat, on the bank of the Delaware River; thence in a southerly direction along the easterly side of the Cole Flat lot and the H. Lerons lot, let the distance be more or less, to a corner in the line of land formerly belonging to Robert Halsey, and now belonging to Erasmus Lorton estate; thence in a southerly southeasterly direction along the said Erasmus Lorton estate to a corner of the C. G. Armstrong lot, let the distance be more or less; thence in a somewhat northeasterly direction along the line of lands belonging to C. G. Armstrong and Kenney Brothers to the Delaware River, let the distance be more or less; thence up the Delaware River to the place of beginning.

CONTAINING one hundred forty (one hundred forty) acres, more or less, and commonly called the Gore lot. Being the same property conveyed by William M. Kellam et ux. and Coe F. Young et ux. to George Gould, by deed dated the 9th day of February, 1904, and recorded in the office for the recording of deeds in and for Wayne county in deed book No. 92, page 128, and being the same land that George Gould and wife by their deed dated the 18th day of July, 1910, recorded in Wayne county deed book No. 101, page 191, granted and conveyed to Gould Lumber Company.

Seized and taken in execution as the property of The Gould Lumber Company at the suit of First National Bank of Hancock, N. Y. Judgment, \$3,000. No. 23 Jan. Term, 1912. Attorney McCarty.

TAKE NOTICE.—All bids and costs must be paid on day of sale or deeds will not be acknowledged.

FRANK C. KIMBLE, Sheriff.

REGISTER'S NOTICE.—Notice is hereby given that the accountants herein named have settled their respective accounts in the office of the Register of Wills of Wayne County, Pa., and that the same will be presented at the Orphans' Court of said county for confirmation, at the Court House in Honesdale, on the third Monday of June next—viz:

First and final account of J. C. Burcher, administrator of the estate of Thomas L. Burcher, Damascus.

First and final account of Frank L. Bedell, administrator of the estate of Helen J. Bedell, Dyberry.

First and final account of Jane Loercher, administratrix of the estate of John Loercher, Honesdale.

First and final account of Homer Greene, administrator of the estate of Charles H. Mills, Lake.

First and final account of Charles J. Stevens, administrator of William F. Stevens, Sterling.

First and final account of John W. Hazleton, administrator of the estate of Angeline H. Masters, Sterling.

First and final account of Helen K. Robacker now intermarried with O. W. Megargel, administratrix of the estate of Mary Robacker, Sterling.

W. B. LESHER, Recorder.

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