

The Root of Evil

By THOMAS DIXON

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SYNOPSIS

Stuart, southern lawyer in New York, is in love with Nan Primrose. His friend, Dr. Woodman, who has a young daughter, is threatened with the loss of his drug business by Bivens, whom he befriended years before. Stuart visits the Primroses.

Nan wants Stuart to accept a place with Bivens' chemical trust. He dislikes Bivens' methods and refuses. Bivens cautions him.

Bivens is in love with Nan. Stuart refuses the offer, and Nan breaks her engagement with the lawyer. Bivens asks Woodman to enter the trust.

Woodman will not yield and sees Bivens' company. The promoter tells the doctor he and Nan are engaged. Harriet Woodman is studying music. Stuart takes Nan for a day in the country.

Stuart pleads with Nan to give up Bivens, but the spell of millions is on her and she yields to it.

Nan becomes Mrs. Bivens. Harriet loves Stuart, but he does not know it. Nine years pass. Stuart becomes district attorney. He investigates criminal trusts. Nan asks him to call.

Stuart wants Woodman to end his suit against Bivens, but the doctor stands firm. Bivens aids Stuart in his investigation of crooked financiers.

Stuart's revelations aid in bringing on a crisis. Bivens promises to add the Van Dam Trust company, which is in trouble. Woodman needs money badly.

In the stock market slump engineered by Bivens, Woodman and many others lose all. The trust company fails because Bivens, at command of the money king, breaks his word. Stuart faces his critics in front of Bivens' bank.

The mob attacks Stuart and injures him slightly. Nan sees it and reveals her love. Bivens piles \$30,000,000 on a table and calls Stuart to see the money to refute rumors of his financial weakness.

Stuart is tempted to join Bivens as his confidential man. He accepts an invitation to visit the Bivens house and is received by Nan.

At a meeting of the discontented, at which Bivens is denounced, a bomb thrower is killed by his own missile. Woodman decides to continue his fight against Bivens.

Harriet confesses to her father her love of Stuart. She needs money to continue her music studies abroad, and Woodman tries to see Bivens to give it to him. Harriet is to sing at a ball at the Bivenses.

Harriet sings at the Bivens ball, which has for its special feature a costume dance of "Death and the Worm." Nan and Stuart revive old memories.

Bivens refuses to compromise with Woodman. The doctor, in desperation, steals some jeweled favors intended for the financier's guests.

CHAPTER XVI

The Last Illusion.

THE longer Dr. Woodman watched the barbaric, sensual display of wealth sweeping before him, the deeper his spirits sank. The butler touched his arm, and he turned with a sudden start.

"Mr. Bivens will be pleased to see you in the little library, sir, if you will come at once."

When the doctor was ushered into the library Bivens, who was awaiting him alone, sprang to his feet with a look of blank amazement, and then a smile began to play about his hard mouth.

"My servant announced that a gentleman wished to speak to me a moment. Will you be good enough to tell me what you are doing in this house tonight?"

The doctor paused and hesitated. His

face scarred from the denigrating insult.

"I must really ask your pardon, Mr. Bivens, for my apparent intrusion. It is only apparent I came with my daughter. She sang tonight on your program."

"Oh, I see, with the other hired singers. Well, what do you want?"

"Only a few minutes of your time on a matter of grave importance."

"I don't care to discuss business here tonight, Woodman," Bivens broke in abruptly. "Come to my office."

"I have been there three or four times," the doctor went on hurriedly, "and wrote you twice. I felt sure that my letters had not reached you. I hoped for the chance of a moment tonight to lay my case before you."

"All right, I'll give you five minutes."

"I felt sure you had not seen my letters."

"I'll ease your mind on that question. I did see them both. You got my answer?"

"That's just it. I didn't. And I couldn't understand it."

"Oh, I see!" Bivens' mouth quivered with the slightest sneer. "Perhaps it was lost in transit?"

The sneer was lost on the doctor. He was too intent on his purpose.

"I know. It was a mistake. I see it now, and I'm perfectly willing to pay for that mistake by accepting even half of your last proposition."

Bivens laughed cynically.

"This might be serious, Woodman, if it wasn't funny. But you had as well know once and for all that I owe you nothing. Your suit has been lost. Your appeal has been forfeited. My answer is brief, but to the point—not one cent. My generosity is for my friends—not my enemies."

"But we are not enemies personally," the doctor explained good naturedly. "I have put all bitterness out of my heart and come tonight to ask that bygones be bygones. You know that in God's great book of accounts you are my debtor."

"I owe you nothing."

In every accent of the financier's voice the man before him felt the deadly merciless hatred whose fires had been smoldering for years.

The doctor's voice was full of tenderness when he replied at last:

"My boy," he began quietly—"for you are still a boy when you stand beside my gray hairs—men may fight one another for a great principle without being personal enemies. We are men still, with common hopes, fears, ills, griefs and joys. When I was a soldier I fought the southern army, shot and shot to kill. I was fighting for a principle. When the firing ceased I helped the wounded men on the field as I came to them."

His voice quivered and broke for an instant.

"You have won. You can afford to be generous. That you can deny me in this the hour of my desolation is unthinkable. I'm not pleading for myself. I can live on a rat's allowance. I'm begging for my little girl. I need \$2,000 immediately to complete her musical studies. Deep down in your heart of hearts you know that the act would be one of justice between man and man."

"As a charity. Woodman, I might give you the paltry \$50,000 you ask."

"I'll take it as a charity," he cried eagerly, "take it with joy and gratitude and thank God for his salvation sent in the hour of my need."

"But in reality you demand justice of me? Come to the point, Woodman, what is in your mind when you say that I am your debtor?"

"Simply that I have always known that your formula for that drink was a prescription which I compounded years ago and which you often filled for me when I was busy. As a physician I could not patent such a thing. You had as much right to patent it as any one else."

"In other words," Bivens interrupted coldly, "you inform me that you have always known that I stole from your prescription counter the formula which gave me my first fortune."

The financier began to speak with slow venomous energy:

"I've let you ramble on in your maudlin talk, Woodman, because it amused me. For years I've waited your coming. Your unexpected advent is the sweetest triumph of this festival night."

He paused and a sinister smile played about his mouth. "The last time I saw you I promised myself that I'd make you come to me the next time and when you did that you'd come on your hands and knees. And I swore that when you looked up into my face groveling and whining for mercy as you have tonight, I'd call my servants and order them to kick you down my doorstep."

He leaned across the massive flat top desk to touch an electric button.

The doctor's fist suddenly gripped the outstretched hand and his eyes glared into the face of the financier with the dangerous look of a madman.

"You had better not ring that bell, yet," he said, with forced quiet in his tones.

"Your trade gives me an idea," said Bivens. "I want you to stay until the festivities end, and enjoy yourself. Take a look over my house. It cost two millions to build it, and requires half a million a year to keep it up. The butterflies those dancers are crushing beneath their feet in my ballroom I imported from Central America at a cost of \$5,000. The favors in jewelry I shall give to my rich guests who have no use for them will be worth \$25,000. Remember that I spent three hundred and fifty thousand on this banquet, which lasted eight hours, and that I will see you and your daughter dead and in the bottomless pit before I will give you one penny. Enjoy yourself. It's a fine evening."

Before the doctor could answer, the financier laughed and left the room.

For a long time the dazed man stood motionless. He passed his big hand over his forehead in a vague instinctive physical effort to lift the fog of horror and despair that was slowly strangling him.

He felt that he was suffocating. He tore his collar apart to give himself room to breathe. He thrust his hand into the hip pocket of his dress suit where he usually carried a handkerchief and felt something hard and cold.

It was a revolver he had been accustomed to carry of late in his rounds through the dangerous quarters of the city. Without thinking when he dressed, he had transferred it to his evening suit. His hand closed over the ivory handle with a sudden fierce joy.

"Yes, I'll kill him in his magnificent ballroom, to the strains of his own music!" he said, half aloud. "I'll give a fit climax to his dance of death and the worm."

He quickly descended the stairs and saw Bivens talking with his wife. He didn't wish to kill him in her presence, and as he passed a look of hatred flashed from the little black eyes of the millionaire. He made up his mind to kill him at the moment the dance was at the highest pitch of gayety.

The music began, and the dancers once more whirled into the center of the room and the crowd filled the space under the grand arch which led into the hall. Bivens was the center of an admiring group of sycophants and worshipful snobs. The doctor's heart gave a mad throb of joy. His hour had come.

With quick strides he covered the space which separated them and without a moment's hesitation thrust his hand into his breast for his revolver. Not a muscle or nerve quivered. His finger touched the trigger softly and he gave Bivens a look which he meant he should take with him into eternity, when just beyond him he saw Harriet. She stood motionless with a look of mute agony on her fair young face, watching Stuart talk to Bivens' wife.

His finger slipped from the trigger, and his hand loosed its deadly grip.

"Have I forgotten my baby?" he cried in sudden anguish. And then another vision flashed through his excited brain. A courtroom, a prisoner, his own bowed figure the center of a thousand eyes while the jury brought in

their verdict.

His breath came in labored gasps as one mad thought succeeded another.

"No!" he said hoarsely. "I must save her. I must be cunning. I must succeed—not fail. I must get what I came here for. I must save my baby. My own fate is of no importance. She is everything."

Bivens had taken from him by fraud his formula, destroyed his business and robbed him of all he possessed. The law gave him power to hold it. He, too, would appeal to the same power and take what belonged to him. No matter how, he would take it, and he would take it tonight.

Bivens had boasted that his favors in jewelry would be worth \$25,000.

The doctor turned quickly and began to search the house until he found the half drunken servant arranging these packages under the direction of a secretary. These favors had been made for the occasion by a famous jeweler—a diamond pin of peculiar design, a gold death's head with diamond teeth and eyes surmounted by a butterfly and a caterpillar. The stones in each piece were worth \$100. They lay on a table in little open jewel boxes, fifty in a box, and each box contained \$5,000 worth of gold and precious stones.

The doctor inspected the boxes with exclamations of wonder and admiration. He bent low over the table for an instant, and when he left one of the jewel cases rested securely in his pocket.

He was amazed at his own skill and a thrill of fierce triumph filled his being as he realized that he had succeeded and that his little girl would go to Europe and complete her work. He spoke pleasantly to the secretary and congratulating him on his good fortune in securing such a master, turned and strolled leisurely back to the ballroom.

Not for a moment did he doubt the safety of his act. He was a chemist and knew the secret of the laboratory. He would melt the gold into a single bar and sell the diamonds as he needed them. His only regret was that he could not have taken the full amount he had demanded of the little scoundrel. He found Harriet and they started at once for home.

"Did you have a good time?"

"Yes, when I could forget the pain in my heart. You succeeded? It's all right? I'm going abroad at once to study?"

The doctor laughed aloud in a burst of fierce joy.

"Certainly, my dear!"

The tears sprang into the gentle eyes as she answered gratefully.

"You can't know how happy you've made me."

Bivens, who had heard the doctor's laughter, passed and said with exaggerated courtesy:

"I trust you have enjoyed the evening, Woodman?"

The doctor laughed again in his face. "More than I can possibly tell you."

Bivens followed to the door and watched him slowly walk down the steps.

(Continued in Tuesday's Issue.)

FLOWERS IN AN EXPLOSION.

Actual Detonation Occurs When Plant Throws Seeds.

There are certain sorts of flowers that "explode" in order to scatter their seeds about, but these are silent explosions brought about every seedling time by nature. For a flower to actually explode with a detonation that can be heard a long distance is quite another thing and a rarity.

Such a floral explosion occurred in the botanical gardens at Algiers recently. It was the spathe or the covering of the bunch of blossoms on a great palm tree. This spathe was nearly three feet long, and when the explosion occurred it was hurled to a great distance, while the shattered blossoms arose like a cloud of golden smoke and covered the top of the palm.

The cause of this was the sun's heat, which was unusual and had actually roasted the flower to the color of rust.

FASHION HINT

By JUDIC CHOLLET

Balkan style coats with skirts to match or of a contrasting color and material are much worn this summer. This model can be made with coat of diagonal or straight front edge and with three-quarter bell shaped sleeves or long plain ones.

The medium size coat will require four and three-quarter yards of material twenty-seven inches wide. There



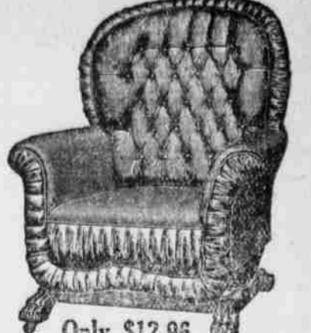
BALKAN SUIT.

is a tendency toward plaits in the new skirts of which this one is an example. The material required is four and a half yards twenty-seven inches wide.

These May Manton patterns are cut in sizes for the coat from 34 to 40 inches bust measure and for the skirt from 22 to 32 inches waist measure. Send 10 cents to this office, giving numbers, skirt 754 and coat 7512A, and they will be promptly forwarded to you by mail. If in haste send an additional two cent stamp for letter postage. When ordering use coupon.

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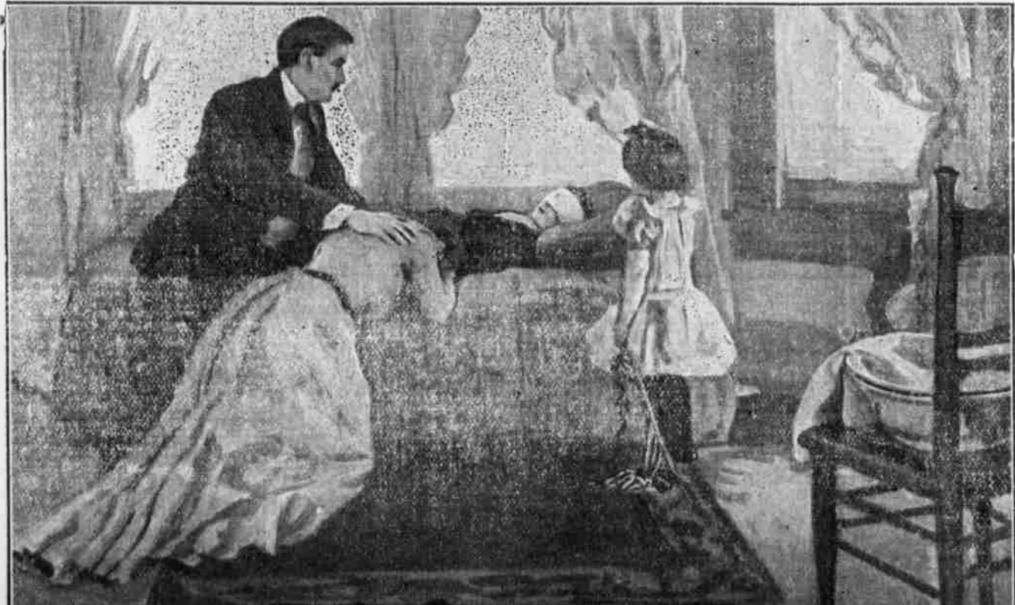
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A FOURTH OF JULY REMINDER—INSIST UPON A SANE DAY. Courtesy of "Life."

Patriotic American, do not cause your dear mother's heart to grieve over what might happen on July 4th as is shown in the illustration. Abandon the idea that Fourth of July can be spent only by firing off canons and ear-splitting crackers. Insist upon your parents spending the day under the shadow of some weeping willow tree or alongside a brook. Take your dinner along and have a picnic. The time would be more pleasantly and enjoyably spent in the din of a town or city where some other boy thinks that the only way to celebrate is by the use of the dangerous mail upon your parents, girls and boys, to spend a sane Fourth.