

The Double Cross

By A. E. THOMAS

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THE STORY

Jim Stanley, wealthy young New York business man, unable to concentrate in his dictation to his desk addiophone, has the machine taken to his home, intending to finish his work there. Rollin Waterman, his business partner and closest friend, comes in. Both men are avowedly in love with Doris Colby. Stanley proposes they toss a coin to determine which of them shall, that evening, first ask her to marry him. Waterman wins. Nina Morozan, Waterman's secretary, also his mistress, has overheard his conversation with Stanley and resents Waterman's plan to desert her. Waterman tells her he is practically penniless and must make a rich marriage. He urges Nina to go to Doris and tell her she (Nina) has been wronged—but by Stanley. The girl consents. Doris admits to her father her interest in both Stanley and Waterman, but is unable to make up her mind which to marry. Nina goes to Doris with her story, securing a promise that Doris will not reveal the source of her information. She convinces Doris of Stanley's duplicity, and leaves her broken hearted, and realizing that it is Stanley she really has loved.

CHAPTER V—Continued

It would not be fair to say that Waterman had no compunctions regarding his treatment of Jim Stanley. He had been deceiving Jim for a long time. Stanley, for example, had no idea that Waterman had been playing the market "on his own," a thing explicitly forbidden to each of them when the partnership was formed. Waterman, having begun a course of dissimulation in this matter, was obliged, or so he thought to keep it up. And as little lies lead to bigger ones, and small disloyalties beget great treasons, so now the tide of deceit on which Waterman had long ago embarked had finally brought him to this crest of treachery. Five years ago he would have been appalled at the mere suggestion of it. Yet, such is the effect of slow but cumulative moral degeneration that now it merely made him uneasy.

And uneasy, increasingly so, he now became as he left the club and turned northward. Nor was this uneasiness at all allayed by his brief colloquy with Nina outside the Colby house. Even after he had been alone with Doris in the Colby drawing-room a quarter of an hour, he still had not the slightest notion as to what had passed between the two women. He had found Doris strange, cold, aloof. He had come there to ask her to marry him, but the moment seemed hardly propitious, despite his agreement with Stanley. Somehow, his suspense must be ended—and quickly. Time was passing—in fifteen minutes more Jim Stanley would be at the door. He must know, and he must know at once. And so he made a plunge. After a long silence, he said abruptly:

"Doris, what's the matter with you? Somewhat to his surprise she did not fence.

"I have just heard the most painful thing in the world," she said.

"Now for it!" he thought, and aloud he said, squaring his shoulders to meet the blow, "About whom?"

"About Jim."

The relief that he felt was overwhelming. Guiltily he felt that she must be conscious of it, but almost simultaneously he saw that she was not thinking of him at all, and inwardly he gave three cheers. "About Jim?" he said.

"A certain person has just been here and told me an awful thing about him."

"What?"

"I cannot tell you. I gave my word of honor."

"Surely you don't believe it?"

"I'm afraid I do."

"Was this talebearer some one you know?"

"No, it was some one I never saw or heard of before."

Instinctively Waterman hit upon the sound course to follow.

"But surely, Doris, you don't mean to say that you believe this scandalous tale told by an utter stranger, and about one of your very best friends?" She feebly shrugged her shoulders.

"But," he went on, "you can't do it! At least you must give Jim a chance to explain—to defend himself!"

"Impossible—I gave my word of honor—"

"Before you heard it?"

"Yes."

"Why on earth did you do that?"

"Because I took it so lightly. I couldn't imagine that it could possibly be anything of the slightest consequence."

"And it is?"

"Yes, it is. It is a thing that no one but a man with a cruel, cruel heart could do. Oh, he might in the first place have done it upon impulse. That I could forgive. But, after that, nothing but cold, cold cruelty could explain it."

"And you can't tell me what it is?"

"No, I can't tell anyone—I've promised."

"But I cannot understand," said Waterman, warmly, his confidence rising with the overwhelmingly welcome knowledge that he himself was not in danger. "I cannot understand. It seems to me that if anybody, I don't care who he was, came to me with a scandalous story about old Jim, I should refuse to credit it until Jim had had a chance to defend himself—especially if, as you say, his accuser was a person whom I did not know at all."

"I can't go into it," said the girl sadly and abruptly, "but I am certain that if you had heard the story as I heard it, you would have to believe it too, no matter how much it hurt you."

"I don't believe it, whatever it is. Why, we've known Jim all our lives—he's one of the very best."

"So I've always thought," she sighed, "until tonight."

"But not any more?"

"Not any more."

Suddenly she put out her hand to him appealingly like a frightened child. "Oh, Rolly, Rolly," she said, "I've lost my friend. He's gone. I've lost him. And it hurts."

Swiftly he was at her side. His time was come. He took the cold little hand in both of his own, and drew it to his breast.

"Doris, dear," he said, "let me help you."

"You can't. You can't."

"I do so want to help you, because you see—I love you."

The long lashes rose above the violet eyes, and then they flickered and fell again. Quietly he drew her to her feet, and with a little sob she slipped into his arms.

"Dearest," he murmured, "don't cry—please don't cry."

"But she only murmured brokenly, 'I've lost my friend—I've lost him.'"

"Yes, yes, I know. But I must try and make it up to you if I can."

And thus it happened. Desperately she needed comfort and—the comforter was there. A moment later she freed herself swiftly from his arms.

"Good heavens," she said, "I had quite forgotten. He's coming here this very night. I can't see him—I can't. I must tell Barker to send him away. Please ring the bell—hurry, hurry!"

But Waterman had anticipated this emergency. "On the contrary," he said promptly, "I think it best that you should see him."

"What now? Oh, I couldn't, I couldn't!"

"Yes, now, darling. Think a moment—think. You have lost your friend, you say?"

"Yes," she said, "and so have you."

"Yes, we've both lost him, haven't we? And yet we cannot tell him so. How do you propose to treat him?"

"Oh," she said, "I haven't thought—there hasn't been time."

"Well, I suggest that my idea is this. You cannot tell him you are no longer his friend without telling him why, and you can't do that. You must let him find it out by degrees, and I think the easiest way to start will be by telling him at once that you are going to marry me."

The violet eyes widened abruptly. In truth, the girl was startled. In a moment of keen suffering she had, it was true, gone to the arms of the comforting Waterman. She had laid there some moments. He had caressed her—she had allowed it. Yet it was not until this instant that she realized fully what this had meant to him. All this he saw in the moment of silence that followed his last remark. His fate was in the balance. He knew it.

"Dearest," he breathed.

At length she turned away. "All right," she said, "as you wish."

His heart leaped—he had won! He was safe. Now to clinch it. "Oh, I am sure I am right, darling," he hurried on. "It will be hard to do, but there's one thing about it, once done it will be over and swiftly over. Since you cannot tell him what you know about him and yet you must believe it, you can't go on seeing him day by day, pretending you are still his friend. No one could do it. So let him know that you're engaged to me. If I am not mistaken, that of itself will be a bit of a blow to him."

She sighed as she dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief. "I suppose you're right," she admitted. "Since it must be, the sooner the better."

"I'm sure of it."

At this moment Stanley entered the room, unannounced, since Barker knew quite well that his mistress was always at home to him. He paused upon the threshold just an instant. Nobody spoke. He feared the worst, but he crossed the room briskly, took the girl's unsuspecting hand, and said, "Well, my dear Doris, and how are you tonight?"

"I'm very well," she said faintly, without looking at him.

"Hello, Jim."

"I haven't seen you in a long time not for four or five hours. Very seldom happens like that. Well, Doris, what's the news?"

"No news," she said faintly.

"I've got to contradict you, Doris," interrupted Waterman. "There is news, the best news I've had in a long time or ever shall."

Stanley's heart sank—his prophetic soul was right. He knew it before Waterman continued:

"It's delightful that you should have happened in as you did, for I am sure that Doris feels as I do when I say that it makes me quite happy that you

should be the first to hear of our engagement."

Jim managed to force a smile, "Splendid," he cried, "splendid! My two very best friends! Doris, my dear friend, my very best wishes—the very best wishes that you could imagine, and then add to those about a thousand more still better ones. And as for you, Rolly, you know perfectly well that I consider you the luckiest man in the wide, wide world."

"Thanks," said Waterman, "I knew I could rely upon you."

"How soon is it to be?"

"We haven't got as far as that," smiled Waterman. "In point of fact it's only just happened."

Jim paused perhaps a second and a half. Within that brief time he made a decision. He suffered—intolerably—with an acuteness of which he had never dreamed. He had an uncontrollable impulse to get away far, far away, with the swiftness of light. If he could only wish himself at the end of the world, and be there with the wish!

"Well, well," he said, "this is delightful! It will make me especially happy as I go away."

"Away?" queried Waterman.

"Yes, I know, I haven't told you, but for a long time I have had a plan in the back of my head. As you know, I have been one of the backers of a series of archeological explorations that the museum has been carrying on

to the interior of Tibet. Nesbitt is starting this week to join the party now in the field, and I'm going with him."

Doris felt that the time had come when she must say something, so she asked: "How long shall you be gone?"

"I've no idea—one year, two years, maybe five. And so I fear that I shall not be present at your wedding. But I plan to have a part in it, none the less. And as your wedding gift from me, my dear fellow, I present you with all my interest, right, title and all that kind of thing, in the business now managed under the style of 'Stanley and Waterman.'"

"My dear Jim!"

"Now don't say no. I'm through with it. I'm sick of the street. I've had six years of it and I'm tired of the game. You enjoy it. You're good at it. I'm afraid at times the limitations I've imposed upon you have irked you a little. I'm afraid I've been a bit of a drag."

"Not at all," murmured Waterman politely.

"Oh, yes, I have seen that there were many times when you were irritated by my ultra-conservatism. But now all that is passed. The business is yours—lock, stock, and barrel."

"But I say, this is mighty sweet of you!"

"Not at all. An event of this importance, an alliance between my two best friends, requires to be commemorated by something more substantial

than the presentation of a pie-knife or a mantel clock. There, there—say no more about it. Now I must be off. Good night, Doris." He took her hand again. "I'll see you again before I go, but again let me say how charmed I am. Next to being happy one's self the most delightful thing in the world is to be assured of the happiness of the two people in that world one loves the most."

"But, my dear Jim, I can't thank you enough—such a princely present!" objected Waterman.

"Nonsense. Why here you are, my two old friends, going to be married—I'd like to do something nice for you—and, well, this is it—that's all. And you know perfectly well I can afford it. I ask only one thing of you in return."

"Whatever it is, it's yours," smiled Waterman.

"In the first place, be happy, but much more than that, make her happy because you see that's about the dearest most important thing in the world."

"You—you'll write, perhaps," asked Doris, feebly.

"Oh, now and then, maybe, and when I come back. Rollin," he added with a smile, "you shall render me an accounting of your stewardship. Good-night, Doris, dear. Good-night, my old boy." He gripped both their hands again. As he reached the door he turned once more and beamed upon them. "You two dear people," he said, "I love you both and always shall!" With that he was gone.

Waterman turned uncomfortably toward the girl.

"Rollin, oh, Rollin, Rollin," she whispered brokenly, as she slipped again into his arms. "I can't believe it, I can't believe it."

Stanley plunged down the steps as the heavy door closed behind him, and hurried blindly across the Avenue. There was tumult in his brain. He had not expected defeat. Not that he nourished any overweening estimate of his personal attractions, or that he regarded them as in any way superior to those of his friend. On the contrary, in his eyes Waterman was quite the best looking man of his acquaintance, the most winning and the most agreeable. Yet Doris had always been to him everything that was kind and sympathetic and understanding. He had never, it is true, made love to her directly, yet she must have known, he thought, what he thought of her, and being uncommonly intelligent, she must have guessed that before very long he would ask her to be his wife.

He had no suspicion whatever of the truth. By no conceivable means could he possibly have guessed the devious route by which Waterman's success had been achieved. He could not know the sudden shock to which the girl's whole nature had been subjected, nor how much she suffered at the conviction of his turpitude. He could not know that Doris in her suffering had unconsciously, blindly, put out her hand, yearning for comfort, and had taken, almost without knowing it, the only comfort that offered itself.

No suspicion of all this crossed or could cross the mind of the stricken Stanley. His nature was of the simplest and most direct. Life had been too easy for him. Everything had been plain sailing. This was the first great shock of his life and it shook him to the core of his soul.

Resolutely, consciously, he endeavored to put the past behind him. He would burn all his bridges, sink all his boats. Yes, that was the thing; immediately he burned with the wish to be gone. He waved his hand at a passing taxi whose driver pulled up so sharply that his rear wheels skidded slightly against the curb. Ten minutes later, in his own apartment, he was telephoning:

"That you, Wilson?—Yes, yes, I'm lucky to find you in on a Saturday night. Something unexpected has come up. I've got to make many plans of importance with a good deal of speed. Were you planning to leave town over Sunday? No?—You're quite sure? Good, then I shall ask you for once to give up your day of rest and meet me at the office in the morning at eleven o'clock. All right. Good-by."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Home Always Most Potent Force in the Formation of Character

By DR. THOMAS ARKLE CLARK, University of Illinois.

YOUNG people of today are better trained, more independent and more self-reliant than those of forty years ago. They are so radically different because in the home they have been given more privileges. They have more freedom, more luxuries. They work best and spend more.

They are, therefore, more selfish, more independent, less respectful and less polite. Too, they are more frank. They pull down the shades on nothing.

I do not overlook the effects of environment, but an experience of many years with tens of thousands of young men and women has brought me to the conclusion that young people are tremendously like their parents. Whatever traits we find in young people, if we look closely enough, we shall find them in their immediate ancestors.

If the young people are so different it is because of the economic and scientific changes in the home. Nobody is at home any more. Father and mother are riding, at the movies or their clubs. The children likewise.

Companions, the church, the schools and the home influence our characters. But the most potent of all these is the home. Courtesy, ideals, truth, honesty—all these have their foundation in the home. We learn by precept and example.

Every parent should remember this, because a child's character is pretty completely determined by the age of fifteen.

In Increasing Numbers, Young People Today Are Turning to Religion

By REV. WILLIAM T. MANNING, New York Episcopal Bishop.

The world is coming back to truer standards. After all, these standards are not mere matters of convention—the Ten Commandments are the divine laws of life upon which the happiness, the progress and the welfare of our race depend.

People are turning to religion again. Churches are crowded, particularly with young people. They are seeing the absurdity of a conflict between religion and science. Life has no meaning without religion.

As a concrete fact, I may say that since our diocesan convention in May, in a period of only five weeks, 16 young men, most of them from New York and almost all of them of a high qualification and promise, have come to me to offer themselves for the work of the ministry.

Then, too, great churches are being built. We are building the greatest cathedral in the whole of the English-speaking world. It is a striking thing that the city of New York sometimes mistakenly regarded as caring only for material things, is erecting one of the greatest buildings in the world to serve no utilitarian purpose, but to stand solely for things of the spirit.

Toilers of Today Co-Workers With Employers in Industrial Production

By BENITO MUSSOLINI, Premier of Italy.

Under the Fascist system employers are co-workers with the producers, whose scale of living should be raised materially and morally, according to favorable moments and possibilities.

In time of a crisis the workmen must accept a wage reduction, but once the crisis is overcome it is to the interest of the employer to augment wages, restoring balance in the situation.

Henry Ford's policy of high salaries is impossible in Italy, for many obvious reasons, and a policy of low salaries is just as inadvisable—the latter by reducing the buying power of vast masses ends by damaging industry itself.

It is to be forecast that peace will not be disturbed by the great Western nations, which are those giving directives to world civilization. After political peace will come social peace.

We are witnessing the eclipse of class struggles. After the last strike of the British miners Europe's laboring classes entered into periods of stasis.

Young Americans Making Mistake in Deserting the Farm for the City

By JAMES J. DAVIS, Secretary of Labor.

The day is passing when the American farmer is being referred to in the slighting manner of yesterday—an attitude on the part of the public, which has been responsible mainly for hundreds of thousands of young Americans deserting the farms of their fathers, because they could not bear to be called "haysacks."

Science has come to the aid of the farmer as it has come to the aid of every class in our community and science is transforming the farmer as it is now transforming the members of every other occupation.

If my advice were sought, I should advise every boy and girl born on a well-developed farm to remain there, unless he or she felt to a marked degree that their vocation lay distinctly elsewhere. There can be as much happiness on a farm in these Twentieth century years as exists within our cities. Even our city dwellers are beginning to cast a longing glance at the great open spaces, and they are manifesting a desire to get beyond the mist and heat of our urban streets.

Modern Girl Leading the Women of the World Into Emancipation

By MRS. NATHAN WOOD, Boston Baptist Church Worker.

God has given us this modern girl whom you sometimes look askance at and yet to whom you must look for the salvation of the world. I believe she has come into the kingdom for such a day of need as this. She is fully developed intellectually and what would we do in the church without her? These modern girls are trained to think for themselves. Sometimes we say they think too much for themselves, but they are the only girls we send to the Orient today, for they are thinking for themselves in the Orient also.

You say the modern girl is unconventional. Yes, just a bit. Perhaps there are among the modern girls some who wear their skirts just a bit too short, but it is these girls who are going out into the Orient to lead the Turkish woman out of her harem and the Mohammedan woman out of her filth and unhappy married conditions. It is these modern girls who are leading the women of the world into emancipation.

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Scr of Hu

TIME

He had been hopelessly, he time. Then, of sitting together at him, and n "Claude, didn't would be willing room for my s "Yes, Cora, I said," he declar "Well, Claude something really "Speak, darlin "Ask me to be you did, don't

DOING

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"Good?" said t should think it is it myself 12 diffe

No Re

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"Oh!" gasped t fled amusement. ly, I hadn't notic

Too

"What's your "I want a ch party."

"She'll be hard

DULL

"Last night I correct girl I've "I had a prett self."

Orders Mus

Small Town C through here with Motorist—But I this car. Cop—Then get it closed.

Note From

Tourist—I suppo quite agitated, t ternational thieve Native—Yes; th put locks on the c

Why

Booker the Agen ventriloquist act at tainment. It's for the Ventriloquist dummy's jaw all watch it. They're

Signs Point

Fond Mamma— propose soon, Dor Daughter—Yes, making so many marks about you