

## *The Intriguer*

nerves in my fingers tingled, but Randolph Mason sat watching her with weary unconcern. When she had finished he lifted his face, hard as metal.

"May I inquire," he said, "why you are thus endeavoring to deceive me?"

The girl caught her breath as though she had been dashed with water. "I am not endeavoring to deceive you," she said.

"Why, then," said Mason, "have you made me these lurid speeches?"

"I have made them," replied the girl, "to acquaint you with my motive for wishing you to remain neutral."

"Pardon me," said Mason, "you have made them to conceal that motive."

The girl recoiled before this brutal thrust, like one before a blow.

"I do not understand you," she said.

"But I understand you perfectly," replied Randolph Mason.

Then he arose and walked past her out into the hall.

I returned over the flag-stone walk with Miss Garnett to her carriage. I could find no words of adequate apology. The warning I had spoken was strikingly justified, sententious regrets would be conspicuously vain. She was silent, like some voluble witness struck swiftly dumb by an amazing query. At the street gate she got herself once more courageously in hand. "Courtlandt," she said, "tell your cold, unemotional master that since he has so ruthlessly taken