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A Prince of Sinners
 By E. Phillips Oppenheim
 Author of "The Traitors," "The Survivor," "A Millionaire of Yesterday," Etc.

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)
 "That," she remarked, "is what Mr. Lavillette says, isn't it?"
 He looked at her with twinkling eyes.
 "Oh, you needn't think I'm being scared into it," he answered. "All the same, Lavvy's right enough. No one man has a right to accept large subscriptions and not let the public into his confidence."
 "Lavillette doesn't believe in our anonymous subscriptions, does he?" she asked.
 "No! He's rather impudent about that, isn't he? I suppose I ought to set him right. I should have done so before, but he went about it in such an offensive manner. Well, to go on with what I was saying, you will come on the council, Mary?"
 "Oh, surely not!"
 "You will! And what is more, I am going to split up the branches into divisions and appoint superintendents and managers, at a reasonable salary. And you," he concluded, "are going to be one of the latter."
 She shook her head firmly.
 "No! I must remain my own mistress."
 "Why not? I want to allot to you the work where you do most good. There is no one half so suitable. I want you to throw up your other work—come into this altogether, be my right hand and let me feel that I have one person on the council whom I can rely upon."
 She was silent for a moment. She leaned back in her chair, but even in the semi-obscure extreme pallor of her face troubled him.
 "You must remember too," he said, "that the work will not be so hard as now. Lately you have given us too much of your time. Indeed, I am not sure that it is not you who need a holiday more than I."
 She raised her eyes.
 "That is—what you have come to say to me?"
 "Yes. I was anxious to get your promise."
 There was another short silence. Then she spoke in dull even tones.
 "I must think it over. You want my whole time and you want to pay me for it."
 "Yes. It is only reasonable and we can afford it. I should draw a salary myself if I had not a little of my own."
 She raised her eyes once more to his mercilessly, and drew a quick little breath. Yes, it was there—written in his face—the blank utter indifference of good fellowship. It was all that had come to ask her; it was all that he would ever ask her. Suddenly she felt her heart throbbing in quick short beats—her cheeks burned. They were alone—even her little maid had gone out. Why was he so miserably indifferent? Why was he so miserably indifferent? She stumbled to her feet, and suddenly stooping down laid her burning cheeks against his.
 "Kingston," she said, "you are so cruel—and I am so lonely. Can't you see that I am miserable. Kiss me!"—at once!
 Brooks sat petrified, utterly amazed at this self-yielding on the part of the last woman in the world whom he would ever have thought capable of anything of the sort.
 "Kiss me—at once."
 He touched her lips timidly. Then she sprang away from him, her hair strangely ruffled. She pointed to the door.
 "Please go—quickly."
 He picked up his hat.
 "But, Mary! I—"
 "Please!"
 She stamped her foot.
 "But—"
 "I will write. You shall hear from me tomorrow. But if you have any pity for me you will go now—this moment."
 He rose and went. She heard him turn the handle of the door, heard his footsteps upon the stone stairs outside.
 She counted them idly. One, two, three, four—now he was on the next landing. She heard them again, less distinctly, always less distinctly. Then silence. She ran to the window. There he was upon the pavement, now he was crossing the road on his way to the underground station. She tore at her handkerchief, waived it wildly for a moment—and then stopped. He was gone—and she. The hot color came rushing painfully into her cheeks. She threw herself face downwards upon the sofa.
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a-letes. We should be doing our duty and talking a little to every one. Let us go back and make up for lost time."
 She rose to her feet, but found him standing in the way. For once the long humorous mouth was set fast, his eyes were no longer full of the shadow of laughter, his tone had a new note in it, the tone which a woman never fails to understand.
 "Dear Lady Caroom," he said, "I was not altogether jesting."
 She looked him in the eyes.
 "Dear friend," she answered, "I know that you were not, and so I think that we had better go back." He detained her very gently.
 "It is the dearest hope I have in life," he said, softly. "Do not let me run the risk of being misunderstood. Will you be my wife?"
 She shook her head. There were tears in her eyes, but her gesture was significant enough.
 "It is impossible," she said. "I have loved another man all my life."
 He offered her his arm at once.
 "Then I believe," he said, in a low tone, "in the old saying—that a glimpse of paradise is sufficient to blind the strongest man."
 They passed into the reception-room and came face to face with Brooks. She held out her hand.
 "Come you have no right here," he declared, "you are not a member of parliament."
 He laughed.
 "What about you?"
 "Oh, I am an inspiration!"
 "I don't believe," he said, "that you realize in the least what is going to happen."
 "I do!" she answered. "I am going to make you relieve Lord Hennibul and take me to have an ice."
 They moved off together. Hennibul stood looking after them for a moment. Then he sighed and turned slowly away.
 "If it is Arranmore," he said to himself, "why on earth doesn't he marry her?"
 Lady Caroom was more silent than usual. She complained of a headache and Brooks persuaded her to take champagne instead of the ice.
 "What is the matter with you to-night?" she asked looking at him, thoughtfully. "You look like a boy—with a dash of the bridegroom."
 He laughed joyously.
 "You should read the evening papers—you would understand a little of the practical effect of the new tariff bill. Mills in Yorkshire and Lancashire are being opened for years have been shut down; in Manchester, Northampton and the boot-makers the unemployed are being all swept into the factories. Manufacturers' places open at all are planning extensions already. The wages bill throughout the country will be the largest next week that has been paid for years. Travellers are off to the Colonies with cases of samples—every manufacturing centre is suddenly alive once more. The terrible struggle for existence is lightened. Next week," Brooks continued, with an almost boyish twinkle in his eyes, "I shall go down to Manchester and walk through the streets where it used to make our hearts ache to see the unemployed waiting like dumb suffering cattle. It will be a holiday—a glorious holiday."
 "And yet behind it all," she remarked, watching him closely, "there is something on your mind. What is it?"
 He looked at her quickly.
 "What an observation."
 "Won't you tell me?"
 He shook his head.
 "It is only one of the smallest cupboards," he said. "The ghost will very soon be stifled."
 "Did you see Lord Arranmore this evening?"
 "Yes. He was talking to the duke just now. What of him?"
 "I have been watching him. Did you ever see a man look so ill?"
 "He is bored," Brooks answered rather coldly. "This sort of thing does not amuse him."
 She shook her head.
 "He is always the same. He is always that weary look. He is living with absolute recklessness. It cannot possibly last long."
 "He knows the price," Brooks answered. "He lives as he chooses."
 "I wonder," she continued, "whether we do not misjudge you and I, Kingston. For you know you have been his judges. You must not shake your head. It is true. You have judged him to be unworthy of a son, and I—I have judged him to be unworthy of a wife. You don't think that we could possibly have made a mistake—that underneath all there is a little heart left—eaten up with pride and loneliness?"
 "I have never seen it," Brooks answered, "the slightest trace of it."
 "Nor I," she answered. "Yet I knew him when he was young. He was so different and amiable and I would try and awaken your charity on behalf of a perfectly worthy object myself—vide the St. James' Gazette."
 "And what do you need from me more than you have?" she asked.
 "Haven't you the sole possession of my society, the right to bore me or make me happy, perhaps, presently, the right to feed me?"
 "For a few minutes?" he answered.
 "Don't be so sure. It may be an hour."
 "I want it," he said, "for longer." Something in his tone suddenly broke through the easy lightness of their conversation. She stole a swift side glance at him, and understood.
 "Come," she said, "you and I are setting every one here a bad example. This is not an occasion for tele-

ence, I would try to forget the past. If he would even express his sorrow for it, show himself capable of any emotion whatsoever in connection with anything or any person save himself, I would be only too thankful to escape from my ridiculous position."
 Then they were silent for a moment, each occupied with their own thoughts, and Lord Arranmore, pale and spare, taller than most men there, notwithstanding a recently acquired stoop, came wearily over to them.
 "Dear me," he remarked, "what gloomy faces—and I expected to see Brooks at least radiant. Am I intruding?"
 "Don't be absurd, Arranmore," she said kindly. "Why don't you bring up that chair and sit down? You look tired."
 He laughed—a little hardly.
 "I have been tired so long," he said, "that it has become a habit. Brooks, will you think me guilty of an impertinence, I wonder? I have intruded upon your concerns."
 Brooks looked up with his eyes full of questioning.
 "That fellow Lavillette," Arranmore continued, "seemed worried about your anonymous subscription. I was in an evil temper yesterday afternoon, and Verity amused me. So I wrote and confounded the fellow by explaining that it was I who sent the money—the thousand pounds you had."
 "You?" Lady Caroom exclaimed almost breathlessly.
 "You sent me that thousand pounds—your?" Brooks cried.
 They exchanged rapid glances. A spot of color burned in Lady Caroom's cheeks. She felt her heart quicken with an unspoken prayer upon her lips.
 Brooks too, was agitated.
 "Upon my word," Lord Arranmore remarked coldly, "I really don't know why my whim should so astound you. I took care to explain that I sent it without the slightest sympathy in the cause—merely out of compliment to an acquaintance: it was just a whim nothing more. I can assure you. I think that I won it at Sandow, or something."
 "It was not because you were interested in this work then?" Lady Caroom asked, fearfully.
 "Not in the slightest," he answered.
 "That is to say, sympathetically interested. I am curious. I will admit that—no more."
 The color faded from Lady Caroom's cheeks. She shivered a little and rose to her feet. Brooks' face had hardened.
 "We are very much obliged to you for the money," he said. "As for Lavillette, I had not thought it was worth a reply."
 Lord Arranmore shrugged his shoulders.
 "Nor should I in your place," he answered. "My position is a little different, of course. I am positively looking forward to next week's verily. You are leaving now, I see. Good-night!"
 "I have kept Mr. Brooks away from his friends," she said, looking at him. "Will you see me to my carriage?"
 He offered her his arm with courtesy grace.
 They passed down the staircase together.
 "You are looking ill, Philip," she said softly. "You are not taking care of yourself."
 "Care of myself," he laughed. "Why for whom? Life is not exactly a playground, is it?"
 "You are not making the best of it!"
 "The best! Do you want to mock me?"
 "It is you," she whispered, "who stand before a looking glass and mock yourself. Philip, be a man. Your life is one long repression. Break through just once, won't you?"
 "Would you have me a hypocrite, Catherine?"
 She shook her head. Suddenly she looked up at him.
 "Philip, will you promise me this? If ever your impulse should come—if you should feel the desire to speak, to act more as a man from your heart—you will not stifle it. Promise me that."
 He looked at her with a faint, tired smile.
 "Yes, I promise."
 "Oh, I mean it," Sybill continued. "Of course, I like to go about and enjoying myself, but it is hideously tiring. And then after a year or two of it you begin to realize a sort of sameness. Things lose their flavor. Then you have odd times of serious thought, and you know that you have just been going round and round in a circle, that you have done nothing at all except made some show at enjoying yourself. Now that isn't very satisfactory, is it?"
 "No," Mary answered, "I don't suppose it is."
 "Now you," Sybill continued, "you may be dull sometimes, but I don't suppose you are, and whenever you leave off and think—well, you must always feel that your time, instead of having been wasted, has been well and wholesomely spent. I wish I could have that feeling sometimes."
 Despite herself, Mary felt that she would like to like this girl. She was so pretty, so natural and so deeply in earnest.
 "There is no reason why you should not, is there?" she said, more kindly than she had as yet spoken. "I can assure you that I very often have the blues, and I don't consider mine by any means the happiest sort of life. But, of course, one feels differently a little if one has tried to do something—and you can if you like, you know."
 Sybill's face was perfectly brilliant with smiles.
 "You think that I can?" she ex-

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claimed. "How nice of you. I don't mind how hard it is at first. I may be a little awkward, but I don't think I'm stupid."
 "You think this sort of work is the sort you would like best?"
 "Why, yes. It seems so practical you know," Sybill declared. "You must be doing good, even if some of the people don't deserve it. I don't know about the washing, but I don't mind it a bit. Do you think it will be a busy morning?"
 "I am sure it will," Mary answered. "A number of people are getting to work again now, since the Tariff Revision Bill passed, and they keep coming to us for clothes and boots and things. I shall give you the skirts and blouses to look after as soon as the washing is over."
 "Delightful," Sybill exclaimed. "I am sure I can manage that."
 "And on no account must you give any money to any one," Mary said. "That is most important."
 "I will remember," Sybill promised.
 Two hours later she broke in upon her mother and half-dozen callers, her hat obviously put on without a looking-glass, her face flushed, and her hair disordered and smelling strongly of disinfectant.
 "Some tea, mother, please," she exclaimed, nodding to her visitors. "I have had one bun for luncheon, and I am starving. Can you imagine what I have been doing?"
 No one could. Every one tried.
 "Skating!"
 "Ping-pong!"
 "Getting theatre-tickets at the theatre!"
 She waved them aside with scorn. "I have washed fourteen children," she declared, impressively, "fitted at least a dozen women with blouses and skirts, and three with boots. Besides a lot of odd things."
 Lord Arranmore set down his cup with a little shrug of the shoulders.
 "You have joined Brooks' Society?" he remarked.
 "Yes! I have been down at the Steppney branch all the morning. And you know, we're disinfecting before we leave."
 "A most necessary precaution, I should think," Lady Caroom exclaimed, reaching for her vinaigrette, "but do go and change your things as quickly as you can."
 (To be Continued.)

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