

Book III.

In the Crucible.

THE TRIAL.

In early October, 1919, my case against Messrs. Jaffray came to trial. Naturally, as I was under the impression that, when I had consulted Mr. Norman Tilley, I had done so with such an action in prospect, I resented his appearance as counsel for the defence. During my cross-examination I gave him a dig on the point. "What did you do next?" was a question he asked. A. "I consulted a man called Norman Tilley, who told me that I had no case, but whether he believed what he said or not, I do not know." "My Lord," spoke up Mr. Tilley, "it is not true: it was not on this case that he consulted me, or I would not have undertaken it." His Lordship, Mr. Justice Lennox, said that he quite understood, and reproved me for questioning the honesty of counsel.

Of course, I felt myself thoroughly discredited and, as I believed that Mr. Tilley had consulted Mr. Starr and found that he had forgotten the circumstances of our joint interview with him, and that he was thus able to say what he pleased, I concluded that the further I would go the deeper the water in which I would find myself.

On the morning of the second day of the trial I was called from the stand and told that I must settle the case, that I was calling these people thieves—the stock exchange committee and the gang generally—and that they "had" something on me which they would "let drop." I accepted this as a threat of imprisonment on a trumped-up charge. Then I was told that a message had been sent by his Lordship in a round-about way that I had better settle.

The man with a knowledge of life will ask why anyone should be frightened by such a threat. My answer is: I am thoroughly of the opinion that the influence of what I call the "Hidden Hand," the money cult, is so strong and at the same time so unscrupulous, that it will stand at nothing to save its proteges from loss. This may be an obsession on my part, but it is, nevertheless, my mind—and, I fancy, there are those who will see me justified. It will suggest itself to the reader that, had I won my case, the stock exchange members would probably be inundated with suits and put to the cost of, possibly, millions. My own idea is that the stock exchange had guaranteed Jaffray against loss. I do not think that any member of the Jaffray firm would stoop to the low method of intimidation, and to sending me such a message as was brought me.

For the reason that I believed myself thoroughly discredited before his Lordship by Mr. Tilley giving me the lie, and his Lordship accepting his word, and because of the message that came to me, ostensibly from his Lordship, and for another reason which I regard as blackmail, I settled the suit for a paltry sum.

A few days after the trial I gained an interview with Mr. Justice Lennox, and was told by him that he had sent me no message.

I have among my papers the following: