

that he was not the Wilkinson of old, that he had, somehow, lost his grip.

"You decline?" asked Flomerfelt. "All right! Then to-morrow the whole story goes to Leslie Wilkinson."

"What whole story, Mr. Flomerfelt?" asked a young woman, now entering the room, and so pleasantly that for a moment Flomerfelt fell back aghast.

"What story, Mr. Flomerfelt?" she repeated. But again he did not answer. And her father, taking his courage in both hands, came forward and said:

"The time has come, girlie, when you've got to make a choice for life—you've got to tell me where you stand—on my side or theirs."

Leslie slowly retreated to the door; a man entered and stood beside her.

"I've made my choice, father. This is Eliot Beekman, my husband," she announced bravely, a smile on her lips.

Wilkinson could not believe his ears. For a moment he did not speak, but looked helplessly from one to the other; and Leslie, waiting for the words that did not come, saw her stepmother grow pale, saw Flomerfelt's fingers stealthily grope into the depths of his sleeves, draw down his cuffs, and heave a sigh as he watched the latter settle into place.