

THE THREAD OF FLAME

of it when a shuffling and laughing were heard from the hall. Suspending our remarks to look up in curiosity we saw Lydia come in leading Drinkwater. From the festive note in their costumes Miss Averill leaped to a conclusion.

"No!" she cried, as the two stood giggling sheepishly before her tea-table. "You haven't?"

"We have."

The statement was his.

"I talked him into it," Lydia declared, laughingly. "He didn't want to, but I was afraid that if I didn't tie him by the leg he'd fly the coop."

"But," I asked, "what about your great career?"

"Oh, well, I've put that off a bit. I can always take it up again. Anyhow, you never heard of an adventuress who wasn't married. She doesn't have to stay married; but a single woman who's an adventuress gets nowhere. The Russian countess in 'The Scarlet Sin' had been married twice, first to a professor—that'd be Harry—and then to a count. I can begin looking forward to the count right now, because Harry is what you may call a thing of the past."

When they giggled themselves out again, to go and give the news to some one else, Miss Averill said, whole-heartedly:

"Well, I'm glad!"

Thinking of Vio and Stroud I asked why.

"Because Lydia is safe for a while anyhow."

"Didn't you think she was safe already?"

"Not wholly. There was *some one*."