

paled until the painted scar on his cheek stood out in livid prominence.

"You are quite right, Mr. Whitefield," he said. "I cannot see my friends lose."

There was a sharp exclamation from Muriel, but before she could speak, the "Hornet" was on his feet.

"What are you talking about?" impatiently. "It's my own affair, if I stand to lose anything. The entire blame for this present muddle rests on me. I planned it, engineered it, was sure of putting it through."

Whitefield turned to Ashe. "There, you see. A deadlock. You are hardly the man to accept such a sacrifice, I take it. And yet," he lighted another cigar, "there is a way out."

"Mr. Colvin," he threw all the weight of the dynamic Whitefield individuality into his proposition, "you have submerged your identity in Vernon. Well, 'Vernon' has made a very good impression. Why not remain 'Vernon'? I do not deny that you have suffered through me, although I do maintain that I acted in self-defense. Financially speaking, you were just about to cut my throat, and naturally I took means to protect myself. That is all a dead issue, though. 'Vernon' to-day could make a fine place for himself. His social, political, or business ambitions would be furthered to an unlimited extent. It is well worth considering." He looked at Ashe with a keen expectancy.

Colvin rested his hand upon the back of a chair as if he felt the need of some support. In the last five minutes he appeared to have grown five years older. The snap and the life seemed all to have gone from him.

"I — don't — know," he said slowly. "I cannot