

THE RECOMPENSE

remove, God or the life force, if anything, is an equation, and at its nearest expression for man—the contract social—it is that also. Its method of expression appears to be that of generating the individual, in all his glittering variety and scope, and through him progressing to the mass with its problems. In the end a balance is invariably struck wherein the mass subdues the individual or the individual the mass—for the time being. For, behold, the sea is ever dancing or raging.

In the mean time there have sprung up social words and phrases expressing a need of balance—of equation. These are right, justice, truth, morality, an honest mind, a pure heart—all words meaning: a balance must be struck. The strong must not be too strong; the weak not too weak. But without variation how could the balance be maintained? Nirvana! Nirvana! The ultimate, still, equation.

Rushing like a great comet to the zenith, his path a blazing trail, Cowperwood did for the hour illuminate the terrors and wonders of individuality. But for him also the eternal equation—the pathos of the discovery that even giants are but pygmies, and that an ultimate balance must be struck. Of the strange, tortured, terrified reflection of those who, caught in his wake, were swept from the normal and the commonplace, what shall we say? Legislators by the hundred, who were hounded from politics into their graves; a half-hundred aldermen of various councils who were driven grumbling or whining into the limbo of the dull, the useless, the commonplace. A splendid governor dreaming of an ideal on the one hand, succumbing to material necessity on the other, traducing the spirit that aided him the while he tortured himself with his own doubts. A second governor, more amenable, was to be greeted by the hisses of the populace, to retire brooding and discomfited, and finally to take his own life. Schryhart and Hand, venomous men both, unable to discover whether they had really triumphed, were to die eventually, puzzled. A mayor whose greatest hour was in thwarting one who contemned him, lived to say: "It is a great mystery. He was a strange man." A great city struggled for a score of years to untangle that which was all but beyond the power of solution—a true Gordian knot.