

Story

Family."

Previous Chapters.

ure in this story is years of age when the had grown up in the seventeen had drifted re he finally got into airly prosperous, mar- the father of three who, when the story rried for some years, oted mother of four teacher, principal schools of the city; l, capricious one, who agement to a young With time, at last, his oars, Roger Gale y, a somewhat lonely e apart from that of ealizes suddenly that a know them. He them out," and the a in a fascinatingly Chapter IV gives a n Deborah and her suspicion of young life-partner for Laura imated. The father istract him, Deborah ert in Carnegie Hall, o Edith's for supper. e approaching mar- s Deborah may find a of a burden after oger feels that the n up, and that his set.

ER V.

ew days later Roger rk. He rode "Wil- cob who as he ad- so subtly and insid- pace from a trot oger barely noticed s riding. As he d to watch the le path with its of riders that kept m under the tall ough he knew scarce- he was a familiar egnized scores of en he nodded at few alluring young ures with bright smiles of greeting, his hat. One was in a Broadway e thought she was crowd." He liked s like that. There s of people here. us ladies riding for e gentlemen riding ere joyous care- laughing merrily. allant foreigners, ng masters, and em apart. There e Squadron who er, and there were ager and flushed, th stolid grooms path in several e the main road e coming of the on deep purple h reflections from eyes. And from sumptuous young e riders. And w this life. And years confronted to come here and or the moment tless gaiety, the e town. Here he it all. Often as a wonder what they . In the riding is horse, it was e English "valet" s and breeches—ld him so, Roger with indignation he not an Ameri-

ful tonic, a great ing him up here fectionate moods, had been through, hter had insisted e brought down he had promised e and she had done hen he had often

met her here with one of her many smart young men. What a smile of greeting would flash on her face—when Laura happened to notice him.

He was thinking of Laura now, and there was an anxious gleam in his eyes. For young Sloane was coming to dinner to-night. What was he going to say to the fellow? Bruce had learned that Sloane played polo, owned and drove a racing car and was well liked in his several clubs. But what about women and his past? Edith had urged her father to go through the lad's life with a fine tooth comb, and if he should find anything there to kick up no end of a row for the honor of the family. All of which was nothing but words, reflected Roger, pettishly. It all came to this, that he had a most ticklish evening ahead! On the path as a rider greeted him, his reply was a dismal frown.

Laura's suitor arrived at six o'clock. In his study Roger heard the bell, listened a moment with beating heart, then raised himself heavily from his chair and went into the hallway.

"Ah, yes! It's you!" he exclaimed, with a nervous cordiality. "Come in, my boy, come right in! Here, let me help you with your coat. I don't know just where Laura is. Ahem!" He violently cleared his throat. "Suppose while we're waiting we have a smoke." He kept it up back into his den. There the suitor refused a cigar and carefully lit a cigarette. Roger noticed again how young the chap was, and marriage seemed so ridiculous! All this feverish trouble was for something so unreal!

"Well, sir," the candidate blurted forth, "I guess I'd better come right to the point. Mr. Gale, I want to marry your daughter."

"Laura?"

"Yes," Roger cursed himself. Why had he asked, "Laura?" Of course it was Laura! Would this cub be wanting Deborah?

"Well, my boy," he said thickly. "I—I wish I knew you better."

"So do I, sir. Suppose we begin."

The youth took a quick pull at his cigarette. He waited, stirred nervously in his seat. "You'll have some questions to ask, I suppose—"

"Yes, there are questions," Roger had risen mechanically and was slowly walking the room. He threw out short gruff phrases. "I'm not interested in your past—I don't care about digging into a man—I never have and I never will—except as it might affect my daughter. That's the main question, I suppose. Can you make her happy?"

"I think so," said Sloane, decidedly. Roger gave him a glance of displeasure. "That's a large order, young man," he rejoined.

"Then let's take it in sections," the youngster replied. Confound his boyish assurance. "To begin with," he was saying, "I rather think I have money enough. We'd better go into that, hadn't we?"

"Yes," said Roger indifferently. "We might as well go into it." Of course the chap had money enough. He was a money maker. You could hear it in his voice; you could see it in his jaw, in his small aggressive blonde moustache. Now he was telling briefly of his rich aunt in Bridgeport, of the generous start she had given him, his work downtown, his income.

"Twenty-two thousand this year," he said. "We can live on that all right, I guess."

"You won't starve," was the dry response. Roger walked for a moment in silence, then turned abruptly on young Sloane.

"Look here, young man, I don't want to dig," he continued very huskily. "But I know little or nothing of what may be behind you. I don't care to ask you about it now—unless it can make trouble."

"It can't make trouble." At this answer, low but sharp, Roger wheeled and shot a glance into those clear and twinkling eyes. And his own eyes gleamed with pain. Laura had been such a little thing in the days when she had been his pet, the days when he had known her well. What could he do about it? This was only the usual thing. But he felt suddenly sick of life.

"How soon do you want to get married?" he demanded harshly.

"Next month, if we can."

"Where are you going?"

"Abroad," said Sloane. Roger caught at this topic as a straw. Soon they were talking of the trip, and the tension

slackened rapidly. He had never been abroad himself but had always dreamed of going there. With maps and books of travel Judith and he had planned it out. In imagination they had lived in London and Paris, Munich and Rome, always in queer old lodgings looking on quaint crooked streets. He had dreamed of long delicious rambles, glimpses into queer old shops, vast, silent, dark cathedrals. For Laura how different it would be. This boy of hers knew Europe as a group of gorgeous new hotels.

The moment Laura joined them, her father's eye was caught and held by the ring upon her finger. Roger knew rings, they were his hobby, and this huge yellow solitaire in its new and brilliant setting at once awakened his dislike. It just fitted the life they were to lead! What life? As he listened to his daughter he kept wondering if she were so sure. Had she felt no uneasiness? She must have, he decided, for all her gay excitement. One Laura in that smiling face; another Laura deep inside, doubting and uncertain, reaching for her happiness, now elated, now dismayed, exclaiming, "Now at last I'm starting!" Oh, what an ignorant child she was. He wanted to cry out to her, "You'll always be just starting! You'll never be sure, you'll never be happy, you'll always be just beginning to be! And the happier you are, the more you will feel it is only a start! . . . And then—"

More and more his spirit withdrew from these two heedless children. Later on, when Deborah came, he barely noticed her meeting with Sloane. And through dinner, while they talked of plans for the wedding, the trip abroad, still Roger took no part at all. He felt dull and heavy. Deborah too, he noticed, after her first efforts to be welcoming and friendly, had gradually grown silent.

He saw her watching Laura with a mingled look of affection and of whimsical dismay. Soon after dinner she left them, and Roger smoked with the boy for a while and learned that he was twenty-nine. Both had grown uneasy and rather dull with each other. It was a relief when again Laura joined them, dressed to go out. She and her lover left the house.

Roger sat motionless for some time. His cigar grew cold unheeded. One of the sorrows of his life had been that his only son had died. Bruce had been almost like a son. But this young man of Laura's? No.

Later he went for his evening walk. And as though drawn by invisible chains he strayed far down into the ghetto. Soon he was elbowing his way through a maze of uproarious tenement streets as one who had been there many times. But he noticed little around him. He went on, as he had always gone, seeing and hearing this seething life only as a background to his own adventure. He reached his destination. Pushing his way through a swarm of urchins playing in front of a pawnshop, he entered and was a long time inside, and when he came out again at last the whole expression of his face had undergone a striking change. As one who had found the solace he needed for the moment, his pace unconsciously quickened and he looked about him with brighter eyes.

Around the corner from his home, he went into a small jewelry shop, a remnant of the town of the past. There were no customers in the place, and the old Galician jeweler sat at the back playing solitaire. At sight of Roger he arose; and presently in a small back room, beneath the glare of a powerful lamp, the two were studying the ring which Roger had found in the ghetto that night. It was plain, just a thin worn band of gold with an emerald by no means large; but the setting was old and curious, and personal, distinctive. Somebody over in Europe had worked on it long and lovingly. Now as the Galician gently rubbed and polished and turned the ring this way and that, the light revealed crude tiny figures, a man and a woman under a tree. And was that a vine or a serpent? They studied it long and absorbedly.

At home, up in his bedroom, Roger opened a safe which stood in one corner, took out a large shallow tray and sat down with it by his lamp. A strange array of rings was there, small and delicate, huge, bizarre; great signet rings and poison rings, love tokens, charms and amulets, rings which had been worn by wives, by mistresses, by favorite slaves and by young girls in convents;

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