

was all my fault. Good night, Mr. Ken-
nion."

She would have passed, but he detained her, standing on the dark threshold with the easy assurance of him to whom the world yields all things good. He was, in truth, the Idol of the Hour. He peered down into her face. It seemed very white now in the dim light. "You're not well," he asserted, promptly. "You look all used up. Old King L—your father isn't here to-night, is he? No? Well, you're not well enough to go home alone. I shall walk along with you."

"No; oh no!" It was almost a cry in its low startled meaning. He laughed negligently. "You're afraid they'll talk," he said. "Well, they sha'n't talk about you. Hang it! just let them try it, that's all. Come!"

He looked very resolute, very handsome—confident, too—as became the Idol of the Hour.

The girl for one instant hesitated. Her glance wandered to the place where her father should have been, but was not. In the empty space she seemed to see a bent, cringing figure, with bleared eyes and evil breath, who had taken a few evenings ago, with obsequious drunken deference, the pieces of silver this man had carelessly, half contemptuously, tossed him in answer to

The flat consisted of kitchen, bedroom and sitting room, which latter was transformed—upon the letting down of an ostensible bookcase, which immediately became a folding bed—into another sleeping apartment, occupied by Cordelia. From the further one at the moment of her entrance proceeded an incoherent muttering, accompanied by a strong smell of spirituous liquid. As the door closed behind her a quavering voice from within—as weak as the odor was strong—demanded if that was "her, Cordelia," and further vociferously entreated for a drink. She drew the curtains that separated the two rooms and looked in, gazing silently upon the spectacle of an old man—and one whom the Scriptures bade her honor—recovering from a three days' drunken debauch.

"You can have no more to drink to-night," she said.

He sat up in the bed, blinking at her as she stood, in her shabby black dress, against the moth-eaten old portiere, slim and beautiful. A shamed look crept over his face. He held out his hands entreatingly. Then on an instant his mood changed. Raising his arm, still powerful, though trembling, he thundered forth the curse of Lear. The "Strike her young bones, ye nimble winds" rolled out in grand sonorous



The First Ride

his mumbled plea. Her mouth hardened. She looked, still and impassive, into the handsome, confident face before her.

"No, thank you. I choose to go alone," she said. "Good night."

She passed him, no longer attempting to detain her, and walked swiftly down the street. He stared after her, an odd compound of vexation, surprise and amusement upon his face. "A regular facer," he muttered; "straight from the shoulder, too, and from old drunken King Lear's daughter—a chorus girl. My boy, you'd better go and quaff a beer at once." And, still with the vexed look lingering on his face, the Idol of the Hour departed to drown his ruffled feelings, if such might be, in the frothy glass.

It was just as the merry party among whom he presently found himself had called for a second round that King Lear's daughter reached home.

It was a tiny furnished flat in the unaristocratic precincts of Third Avenue, up three flights, back. Its assortment of odds and ends of mismatched furniture, suites and miscellaneous collection of crockery, linen and silver took just seven dollars per week out of her weekly wage of twenty dollars, King Lear himself leaving all such frivolous and mundane matters solely to his daughter's effort and discretion.

cadence that once had charmed and thrilled audiences to a tumult of applause. "That she may know how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child," trailed away into a husky, indistinct mutter. It was grotesque; it was tragic; it was pitiful.

He fell back at the close to sink into a half drunken sleep. Cordelia, who had not spoken or moved during the outburst, smoothed the disordered bedclothing, and, drawing the portieres, passed into her own room. For quite half an hour she stood by the window looking out. There was a narrow court, and beyond this a high brick wall, offering little in the way of inspection. Between her and the wall, however, over and over again, stood an easy, careless figure, with a handsome, laughing face; now appearing, now disappearing as through a mist of tears, against the blackness of the barren wall.

A muttering from the adjoining room aroused her at length. Stray fragments of appeal, mingled with "serpent's tooth" and "thankless child," met her ears. She turned there with a sigh, the vision fading utterly. Such things were not for kings' daughters such as she, even in dreams.

It was evening again. She had lived her day.

She had tidied the flat, mended a rent

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