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AS BY FIRE

By AGNES LOUISE PROVOST.



"At the threshold he fell, and a woman, with toil-worn hands and a plain face made beautiful by solicitude, came running out and bent over him."

TED, I wish you would give up this Oliver fellow. I have seen his kind before, and they are no good." Young Burton flushed resentfully. He was scarcely more than a boy, with all a boy's headstrong notions of the right of personal freedom. Moreover, an uneasy recollection of certain events that had taken place in Oliver's company gave Lethington's words enough of the sharpness of truth to make them sting uncomfortably.

"I don't think you understand Oliver," the boy began, defensively, finding arguments as he went and piling them up to justify his position. "He's an independent chap, and doesn't take any trouble to explain his actions to people he doesn't care about. Just because he is a stranger here it doesn't follow that he isn't as good as other people. He's a good fellow who likes to have a good time and see other people have it, too." Lethington listened as patiently as he could. It was just the sort of argument he might have expected from a headstrong boy who had fallen into the hands of an older and faster set than he had known, but he had hoped for

better things from Leila's brother. He looked down at the weak, handsome, sulky face and tried to see what change had come over it in the six months of his absence. There was a heaviness about it, a trace of petulance about the mouth and a new bravado of manner, every indication of a young life lived at high pressure.

"Does Oliver have his good times at your expense?" he queried, dryly, and Ted's resentment flashed into temper.

"I presume I may do what I please with my own money," he said, defiantly. "You needn't be alarmed, the estate is evenly divided."

In his excitement the boy uncon-

sciously raised his voice, and a group of men a few yards away caught his words. One of them half turned with a surprised start, and as quickly averted his face again.

The insinuation was a nasty one, since everybody knew that less than a year ago Lethington had been the most assiduous suitor for Ted's sister Leila. Since then the crash had come, Lethington's father had failed, and now Lethington, who had once been a leader among the men and the most alluring of eligibles, was practically penniless, beginning at thirty-four to work his way up again. He was no longer seen at every gay event in Leila Burton's

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