

THE EQUATION

BY BILLEE GLYNN



HE history of Robert Hatter was much the same as that of many others. He had been born in the country; ambition carried him to the city; he had gone into business and had become engrossed in it. At the age of ten he sold Sunday papers on the streets of his native town. The mothers of lazy boys pointed him out as an example. And such pointing was all the more potent in that the father of this exemplar was in fairly prosperous circumstances, having a small business that kept his family nicely.

When but fifteen Robert Hatter could boast of a bank account. At that age, indeed, he was too shrewd to waste a peanut on an elephant. He had learned the value of money, and his parents were satisfied with him. They admitted to themselves that neither of them had possessed the hoarding instinct sufficiently. They had not even taught it to their son, though they approved it in him and the energy which went with it. Undoubtedly it had been inspired by another person. While he was but a little fellow, a plutocrat and politician, noted in the community for his success, had patted the boy cordially on the head and thus advised him: "Always get something for everything you do. You have only one life to live, and don't forget that success is money."

Robert Hatter never did forget. When at twenty-four he set out to conquer the city it was with that idea in mind, and repeating that axiom:

"I have only one life to live, and I have no time to be a fool."

The gold-gathering lures of the metropolis consequently enticed him little. In three years, after serving a necessary clerkship, he started in a produce commission business for himself. This was the beginning of the great engrossment. He worked from gray morning until midnight. But toward the end of his twenty-eighth year he took the time and the trouble to get married.

She had two thousand dollars, this young lady, of intensely respectable people, and she had a plain, wistful face that constantly did its best to smile. This faded out with the years somewhat, but it appealed to Robert Hatter then. He remembered always the first day he saw her when she came smiling toward him through a field of dead autumn grass. Later she had thrilled him by admitting how much she admired his type of man.

Fifteen years after he married her she died. Robert Hatter was worth a quarter of a million dollars by this time. She had proved a very good wife. It was a great loss, but the interest in new investments helped him over it. Though the look on the face of the dead, the ashen futility which death drew out from this attempt at gratitude and self-compensation, haunted him. Their only child, a boy of thirteen, he sent away to boarding school. He chose a select place where he knew that only the proper code would be taught. This boy was in general physical appearance like his mother. He had his father's chin, however, which was long and square-