

THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY

She faltered the word after him: "Yes——?"

"Are you going to marry me?"

She stared, bewildered. "Why, Elmer—marry you? You forget!"

"Forget what? That you don't want to give up what you've got?"

"How can I? Such things are not done out here. Why, I'm a Catholic; and the Catholic Church——" She broke off, reading the end in his face. "But later, perhaps . . . things might change. Oh, Elmer, if only you'd stay over here and let me see you sometimes!"

"Yes—the way your friends see each other. We're differently made out in Apex. When I want that sort of thing I go down to North Fifth Street for it."

She paled under the retort, but her heart beat high with it. What he asked was impossible—and she gloried in his asking it. Feeling her power, she tried to temporize. "At least if you stayed we could be friends—I shouldn't feel so terribly alone."

He laughed impatiently. "Don't talk magazine stuff to me, Undine Spragg. I guess we want each other the same way. Only our ideas are different. You've got all muddled, living out here among a lot of loafers who call it a career to run round after every petticoat. I've got my job out at home, and I belong where my job is."

"Are you going to be tied to business all your life?" Her smile was faintly depreciatory.

"I guess business is tied to me: Wall Street ac-