

"None of your business."

As if that settled the matter, and removed all obstacles and moral scruples, the unshaven man sighed, and held out his hand for the money which was to bind the contract.

Twelve hours later, Fanny McIver's death was being attributed by the authorities to the insane, jealous rage of a lover. But as she had lately changed her name and address, she lay for a while in the morgue awaiting identification. It was the legless beggar who performed that last solemn rite. He was quite unmoved. Her death mattered no more in his scheme of life than the death of a fly.

But as he held up his hand and swore that the identity of the corpse was such and such, he remembered how graceful she had been at sixteen, how affectionate, how ready to forgive. He remembered with a certain admiration that during the heyday of her earning powers she had always trusted to his generosity, and had never tried to hold any of her earnings back. Prison and drink had destroyed all that was honest in her, all that was womanly. So a drop of acid will eat out the heart of the freshest and loveliest rose. She became a very evil thing—full of evil knowledge. There was even a certain danger in her—not much—nothing definite—but enough. She was better dead.

He turned and swung out of the morgue into the sunlight. And he wondered whatever had become of the child that she had borne him.