

disgrace to our family."

"Yes," he answered coldly, "but not probable."

"What do you mean?"

"You are a woman," he said, "and in deference to your sex, I will say that I do not believe you would have come here, had you known the nature of a settlement and its terms proposed by your father."

"No, I don't know," she said in a low voice, "what was it?"

"Miss Travers, your father pretends to be confident that he will come off victorious in this trial but disliking what he was pleased to term 'the slight embarrassment incident to a trial, its publicity, and so forth,' he sat in that chair yesterday and informed me that if I would persuade my clients of the folly of further prosecution he would pay me a fee double that advanced by my retainers. I was not for sale and he left in a fury."

"O-h—I did not know that."

Then the woman was silent. When she had first entered the office her thoughts were as much for her father as any one, for she loved him. She had entertained a vague hope that the point involved was some business irregularity which might be rectified. But what she had just overheard, combined with this, caused a sickening fear to possess her. She sank into the chair, covering her face with her hands. She was not thinking of her father now, but of her sick mother and the little ones at home—the thought of whom had brought her to the office.

THE lawyer was somewhat annoyed by her attitude. "I am sorry," he said simply.

Vaguely encouraged by the tinge of kindness in his tone she looked up.

Curtiss was studying her intently but he did not see the tears through the veil.

"Tell me," she pleaded in a voice scarcely audible, "Is—the—charge—fraud?"

"Yes."

"And there is no way out?"

"No. I think not—and even if there was—"

"Then—"

"Miss Travers, I regret all this very much, but I must speak plainly. In the first place I am bound to my clients. In the second place, after a man has by his mere money power defeated every decent political venture I have made for ten years—and then presumes I am for sale, it is hardly reasonable to suppose that I should suddenly become a charitable institution in his behalf. I am afraid it will be useless as well as painful to you to prolong this interview."

Every word fell heavy on the woman's heart. She felt her mission hopeless.

"You—you are sure—that you have the proof?"

"That is hardly for me to say under the circumstances," replied Curtiss. "Hadn't we better leave the matter?"

"I was not listening to your conference in here—"

She had risen, her superb figure throbbing with passion—her bosom heaving. "That is not true!" she panted. "My father did not know I came here."

The man watched her uneasily.

"Mr. Curtiss," she went on in a milder tone, "I realize that you have been deeply wronged—and insulted, I can see why you would believe almost anything—but you are mistaken in thinking that I was sent here. When I came I didn't know the case was so serious, although I knew its effects would be. I thought I knew what I wanted to say—but I have failed—I—"

Even as she spoke the inevitable seemed to blind her. Objects in the room assumed a darker hue. She held her hand out in a little mute gesture of appeal. A pitiful cry escaped her. Clutching the sleeve of his coat she burst forth in a stream of incoherence.

"I don't want you to do anything—dishonorable—Don't be revengeful,"—she pleaded. "Tell me—couldn't you settle this thing—honorably and—avoid—the—disgrace—"

The lawyer was beginning to feel some sympathy, but to her his face was inscrutable.

Crushed by the obvious futility of what she had said, she laughed a little hysterically and lapsed into the pleading tone of a little child.

"Oh, I know—you don't understand—you don't know mamma is sick—that it would kill her. And my poor little brother and sister—Tell me you will do something—please—I—"

The man was plainly moved

"Try and calm yourself," he said gently.

But she didn't hear. Unconscious of her actions she gripped the lapels of his coat.

"Tell me—that—you—won't—please—"

And then it was all dark—she couldn't see the lawyer's face. Her limbs were giving under her. She sank to her knees.

Mistaking her attitude, Curtiss stooped to help her up. "Miss Travers, I will help you, but I cannot permit this."

But the form was limp. He bent closer. She had fainted.

Gathering her in his arms as though she were a child, he carried her over to a couch and laid her down carefully.

RUSHING into the main office he returned with some cold water. Gently removing the veil, he paused for a brief second, overwhelmed with a feeling of self-abasement. There were the unmistakable lines of suffering. The countenance was noble in its sorrow. It was the face of a beautiful woman.

He moistened the colorless lips and bathed the temples. Then rummaging behind some old law books he unearthed a flask of brandy.

Moving a chair close to the couch he sat down. Holding her wrist with one hand he applied the flask to her lips with the other.

was a plaintive note in the pleading tone—like a child lost in the night.

"Yes, but you must be quiet. It will be all right." He was fanning her with his broad felt hat.

The clock in the corner struck twelve. The woman roused herself suddenly and sat upright. An obvious silence followed. There was something about the man which Jeneatte Travers could not understand. Only a few minutes before she had feared him—the lawyer, but now she was conscious of a subtle feeling of safety that amounted almost to security. She was the first to break the silence. "I am ashamed of this weakness," she faltered.

"You have nothing to be ashamed of. I regret that I spoke so harshly." Then he resumed in a more matter of fact tone, "I will do my utmost to settle this affair quietly."

"What will you do?" she asked, her gaze bent to the floor.

"I shall go to your father this afternoon and try to convince him that—"

"But you know his temper," she said, a little frightened, "he might forget himself. You wouldn't stri—"

"Your father is a much older man than I am. I shall respect his age," he said, bowing.

She was moving toward the door. Turning, she paused, "Mr. Curtiss, I don't know—how to thank you—I—"

"Never mind that," replied Curtiss awkwardly.

Jeanette Travers extended her hand to the lawyer. Her whole womanly nature overwhelmed with gratitude, she looked into his eyes as though fascinated. "You are—a—man," she said brokenly and was gone.

Rogers entered the office. "What's the matter, Curtiss?" he said, "you look like you had lost your best friend."

"No," returned the other. "Sit down, Rogers, I would like to speak to you a moment on a very delicate matter."

"All right, I am listening."

"Well," said Curtiss, "that lady you met in the hallway was Miss Travers."

"Old Travers' daughter?"

"Yes."

"The devil you say—well, what about it?"

"I hardly know how to tell you, Rogers—You wouldn't understand, for you weren't here, but—"

"Go on."

"Well, Miss Travers, displaying the most pitiful ignorance of legal matters, the justification for this trial and all that, came here to plead for those that would suffer at home—at first I—"

"Fine sentiment," observed Rogers in a hard tone. "Good God, Curtiss, you don't mean to tell me that a mere woman's trick has blinded you to the best opportunity that has ever come your way?"

"Rogers!" There was a note of anger in the tone. "You know me better than that," said Curtiss pointedly.

"I beg your pardon—tell me about it—I don't understand, but I will try and follow you."

CURTISS without reservation related the interview to his partner just as it had happened—stumbling over the last part and omitting her last words.

Rogers drummed nervously on the desk. "I think I can see why it should have unnerved you—but Curtiss, I'll tell you, frankly, you have always mixed too damn much sentiment in your profession for your own good. I am afraid also that your forget that old Travers has had the thumbscrews on you for ten years. Besides, you are running the fifth time for District Attorney. You get my meaning, don't you?"

"Not quite, proceed."

"Don't you know that even assuming that a settlement could be effected, the transaction would look shady enough on the outside to destroy your chances for the office."

Curtiss was silent. He paled as the truth of the words dawned upon him. At last he spoke. There was a tense ring of finality in his tone.

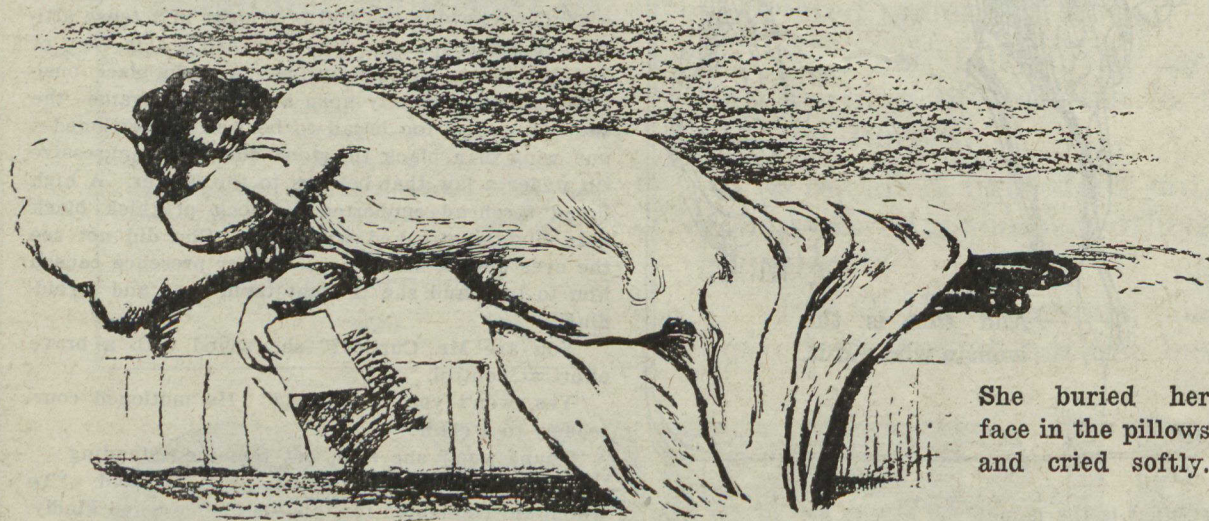
"Rogers," he said slowly, "I would see the best office in the land in hades before I would be haunted with the vision of such a sorrow as I witnessed a few moments ago—if I could help it."

Rogers saw the futility of further argument. "Do you really think it possible to prevent it?" he asked.

"Yes."

"How?"

"Briefly this: You know the proof in the case is absolute."



She buried her face in the pillows and cried softly.

but I heard you say something about—proof—a letter." Her body shook with a convulsive sob.

The man did not see her agitation. He only heard what she said. His face purpled with suspicion. He thought she had been acting a part.

"So your father sent you here to spy—to see what you could find out—how much more did you hear? But of course you wouldn't say. I am sorry—for you Miss Travers. I knew your father would stoop to most anything, but, Great God, I didn't think he would fall so low—as to—employ his women as his—tools! I—"

Finally the white eyelids trembled. He held her wrist tighter. "Miss Travers—Miss Travers," he was calling gently.

Gradually a faint color suffused her cheeks—the long black lashes parted perceptibly—the lips murmured, "Where—where am I?"

And then she saw. It was not the lawyer sitting there but the man. There was a tinge of mist in the grey eyes. She gazed long and searchingly into them.

"I understand," he said. His tone was tender as a woman's.

"Then—then you will—will do something?" There