

## THE BEST MAN

a public man are usually made in such a blare of headlines and cloud of mud-throwing that the voice he lifts up in his defence can't make itself heard. In this case I want the public to hear what I have to say before the yelping begins. My letter will take the wind out of the 'Spy's' sails, and if the verdict goes against me the case will have been decided on its own merits and not at the dictation of the writers of scare-heads. Even if I don't gain my end, it will be a good thing, for once, for the public to consider dispassionately how far a private calamity should be allowed to affect a career of public usefulness, and the next man who goes through what I'm undergoing may have cause to thank me if no one else does."

Shackwell sat silent for a moment, the ring of the last words in his ears.

Suddenly he rose and held out his hand. "Give me the letter," he said.

The Governor smiled. "It's all right, then? You see and you'll take it?"

Shackwell met his glance with one of melancholy interrogation. "I see a magnificent suicide—but it's the kind of way I shouldn't mind dying myself."

He pulled himself silently into his coat and put the letter in one of its pockets: but as he was turning to the door the Governor called after him cheerfully: "By the way, Hadley, aren't you and Mrs. Shackwell giving a dinner to-morrow?"