

swindling Wallace. Say a hundred thousand dollars."

"Why, it's nothing," she cried.

"I'm glad you think so," he replied grimly.

She ran to her dainty escritoire. There she scribbled eagerly for a few moments.

"There," she cried, her eyes shining, "there is my check book all signed in blank. I'll see that the money is there."

Thorpe took the book, staring at it with sightless eyes. Hilda, perched on the arm of his chair, watched his face closely, as later became her habit of interpretation.

"What is it?" she asked.

Thorpe looked up with a pitiful little smile that seemed to beg indulgence for what he was about to say.

"I was just thinking, dear. I used to imagine I was a strong man, yet see how little my best efforts amount to. I have put myself into seven years of the hardest labor, working like ten men in order to succeed. I have foreseen all that mortal could foresee. I have always thought, and think now, that a man is no man unless he works out the sort of success for which he is fitted. I have done fairly well until the crises came. Then I have been absolutely powerless, and if left to myself, I would have failed. At the times when a really strong man would have used effectively the strength he had been training, I have fallen back miserably on outer aid. Three times my affairs have become critical. In the crises I have been saved, first by a mere boy; then by an old illiterate man; now by a weak woman!"

She heard him through in silence.

"Harry," she said soberly when he had quite finished, "I agree with you that God meant the strong man to succeed; that without success the man has not