

THE PENALTY

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THE number of love affairs which intervened between Barbara Ferris's first one, when she was eleven, and her twenty-second birthday could not have been counted on the fingers of her two hands. Many boys, many men, had seemed wonderfully attractive to her. She did not know why. She knew only that the attraction seemed strong and eternal while it lasted, and that it never lasted long. She was sixteen before she began to consider herself a heartless, flirtatious, unstable, jilting sort of a girl. When she made this discovery, she was terribly ashamed, and for one long depressing year fell in love with nobody, became very shy, and hated herself. It was during this year that she had her first, last, and only touch of mania. It lasted only a little while and was not acute. She got the idea that she was being watched, spied on, and followed. But she was too strong in body and mind to give in for long to so silly an hallucination. And when she had dismissed the second man and her maid, who had particularly excited her suspicions, the mania left her, as a dream leaves at waking.