

THE RECOMPENSE

fury. But as for him, he was tired, sick of Chicago, sick of this interminable contest. Only recently he had promised himself that if he were to turn this great trick he would never again attempt anything so desperate or requiring so much effort. He would not need to. The size of his fortune made it of little worth. Besides, in spite of his tremendous vigor, he was getting on.

Since he had alienated Aileen he was quite alone, out of touch with any one identified with the earlier years of his life. His ali-desired Berenice still evaded him. True, she had shown lately a kind of warming sympathy; but what was it? Gracious tolerance, perhaps—a sense of obligation? Certainly little more, he felt. He looked into the future, deciding heavily that he must fight on, whatever happened, and then—

While he sat thus drearily pondering, answering a telephone call now and then, the door-bell rang and the servant brought a card which he said had been presented by a young woman who declared that it would bring immediate recognition. Glancing at it, Cowperwood jumped to his feet and hurried down-stairs into the one presence he most craved.

There are compromises of the spirit too elusive and subtle to be traced in all their involute windings. From that earliest day when Berenice Fleming had first set eyes on Cowperwood she had been moved by a sense of power, an amazing and fascinating individuality. Since then by degrees he had familiarized her with a thought of individual freedom of action and a disregard of current social standards which were destructive to an earlier conventional view of things. Following him through this Chicago fight, she had been caught by the wonder of his dreams; he was on the way toward being one of the world's greatest money giants. During his recent trips East she had sometimes felt that she was able to read in the cast of his face the intensity of this great ambition, which had for its ultimate aim—herself. So he had once assured her. Always with her he had been so handsome, so pleading, so patient.

So here she was in Chicago to-night, the guest of friends at the Richelieu, and standing in Cowperwood's presence. "Why, Berenice!" he said, extending a cordial hand.