

of the night, and he sighed a little as he allowed his thoughts to carry him to a house not far away.

"Shall I go?" he asked himself, as he walked slowly along the terrace. "Shall I go? If I do, I shall get—what? Praise, soft glances, whispers of adoring worship? Perhaps. But that would never do now. No, I mustn't go. It would be fatal. Thank the powers I never spoke. Now, one must think, and think hard. Success or Love? Choose ye this night!"

He laughed a little mirthlessly. Then he walked out of the precincts and passed into the hurrying tide of humanity that swept over the bridge. Once as he passed under a glaring lamp, he saw a little group of men suddenly stiffen and point in his direction. They bent together and whispered eagerly. It felt good to be the object of their regard. A passing newsboy with a late edition ran, screaming: "Sensational speech! Speshul!" It was his speech that was causing all this uproar, and this was the taste of success. Very good indeed.

Merged in thought, he walked on heedlessly, and looked up with a start to find himself in a well-known street. He shuddered a little as he realized whither his unconscious steps had led him. This was the street in which Marjorie Sandys lived. He was almost opposite the door now, and a sudden blaze of light flashed across the pavement, that particular door was thrown wide. A motor was chugging away impatiently at the kerb, and Creighton instinctively shrank back. Marjorie herself passed out. He could see the beauty of her face for one instant, could mark the live grace of her figure, in spite of the heavy motor coat that shrouded it. He was on the point of darting forward to tell her of all that had happened, but he restrained himself with an effort as the words of his well-wisher came back to mind.

"I must have time," he muttered, as the motor darted away; and he turned back, leaving the quiet residential streets behind him, plunging into the vortex of the traffic.

His man was awaiting him when he entered his rooms. A meal was laid on the table, and he sat himself down, eating and drinking mechanically, as he had mechanically dressed.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said the man; "but I've just finished reading the special edition. It was great, sir."

Creighton laughed somewhat self-consciously, for he was still very young, and he had not learned to know that fame is the most intangible thing in the world. But it was very sweet, very precious. He said nothing in reply, but when the meal was cleared away, he donned a smoking jacket, found his biggest pipe, kicked the fire into a blaze, and sat down in a deep chair seriously to consider the greatest problem he had ever been confronted with in his life.

Fame or Love—which? He stared into the glowing embers, and Marjorie's face took shape there, alluring, wistfully beautiful, almost irresistible; a face to win one smile from which it were good to die. He took the poker angrily, and pounded at the coals until they fell down in a huddled mass, and Marjorie's face disappeared.

"That is what Love offers; what will Fame bring?"

He asked himself the question quite coolly, for he was bringing all the forces of his wonderful intellect into the struggle.

Fame would bring many things. It was a delicious play of the fancy to imagine the coming years. A vista opened out in the heart of the fire, and he could see himself trudging upward and ever upward. Trudging? Nay, leaping, racing—almost flying, as he had once seen a startled chamois dart up the almost inaccessible crags of an Alpine mountain. Under-Secretary, Cabinet Minister, Prime Minister, House of Lords—no one might say where that fortune-haunted path might lead.

"One can't settle it here," he said impatiently, as Marjorie's face grew up at the end of the path he had vaguely pictured in the fire. He allowed himself for one moment to forget all about the past evening, and launched himself upon a sea of dreams. Marjorie was everywhere. She loved him. He knew it without undue egotism, for the simplicity of the girl had allowed the fact

to become only too plainly apparent. Life with Marjorie would be one long delirium of unending delight. Love would crown their lives, would draw them onward and upward into realms that those who had never loved could not dream of. Love meant—

He rose from his seat and walked about the room. Love must be stifled, cast aside, sunk fathoms deep beneath the sea if his dreams of fame were to be realized.

"I'll go to bed," he said vexedly. "A night's sleep will show me where I stand."

But night brought no relief to harassed thought. The visions crowded in behind his firmly closed eyelids, and sleep held sternly aloof.

Morning found him haggard and pale, undecided, torn by conflicting emotions.

"I know what I'll do," he said as he breakfasted. "I'll leave town for today. I'll go down by the sea, and then fight the matter out with my own soul."

There was an unimportant debate on at the House that day, and his presence was not required. As soon as he could, he left his rooms, caught a chance train, and came out at a place where he had known for long. A sudden thought made him laugh ironically, as he alighted at the little station. This was the place where he had first met Marjorie. The town, the yellow beach, the inland downs all spoke of Marjorie; every little object in sight was reminiscent of the girl.

He had gone there half unconsciously, his thoughts having flown there by instinct, when he had first mooted the subject of solitude to himself.

It was a magnificent day to settle such a battle as that which had to be fought. He was invited to 15 Worthington Square for that night, and that was Marjorie's home. He would see her for several hours; he would have endless opportunities of speaking all that was in his mind. He must come to a firm decision within a few hours. The wind blew in from the sea, salt, vigorous, warlike, and it aroused all that was militant within him. He came of a fighting stock, and the old blood told. There was a light rain falling, and it beat on his face gladly as he plowed steadfastly along the sea-coast, wrestling with his inner soul.

"What shall it be?" he asked himself again and again. "Love or Fame?" The answer would not come from without.

"Fame means so much. I can do great things—not for myself, but for the world. I know I can. Heavens above! that was but the beginning, that speech last night. There's no telling where it might end. The lists of battle and loneliness, or love and the backwaters of life? Which?"

It was a hard fight. There was so much to be said on both sides; for he was a man in whom sentiment ran strongly. But sentiment must be stifled, if needs were. Common-sense must reign in his soul for he owed a duty to himself.

"And to Marjorie," said an insistent voice in his brain.

"I don't," he exclaimed aloud. "So far—thank Heaven, I drew up in time!—so far she's never heard a word from me that any man might not have spoken. I've never even shown her any attention that might be construed as lover-like devotion. We have been good friends, that's all."

He was quite right in that respect. Not even the most chivalrous mind could have construed his conduct in any other way. He had not compromised the girl; he had met her carelessly, and had left her as casually. Whatever had been in his heart before the events of the past evening he had never given a sign. Some called him hard and callous, but he knew himself that if he allowed the love he bore for Marjorie—yes, he owned it to himself at this juncture, he did love her—full sway, it would be an impetuous torrent that would carry him all-whither so that she might be glad.

That was what made the words of the man he had overheard so full of potent meaning. He knew his own capacity for loving, knew that once he embarked on that rushing tide of passion, all other matters must be relegated to oblivion. For with him it was all or nothing. Either he must give in to his natural

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