

A KNIGHT OF THE NETS

chosen its destiny, and that rebelled a little under the constraint.

Madame was sitting alone in the waning light; her son had been away from her all day, and had sent her no excuse for his detention. She was both angry and sorrowful; and there had been a time when Archie would have been all conciliation and regret. That time was past. His mother had forfeited all his respect; there was nothing now between them but that wondrous tie of motherhood which a child must be utterly devoid of grace and feeling to forget. Archie never quite forgot it. In his worst moods he would tell himself, "after all she is my mother. It was because she loved me. Her inhumanity was really jealousy, and jealousy is cruel as the grave." But this purely natural feeling lacked now all the confidence of mutual respect and trust. It was only a natural feeling; it had lost all the nobler qualities springing from a spiritual and intellectual interpretation of their relationship.

"You have been away all day, Archie," Madame complained. "I have been most unhappy about you."

"I have been doing some important business."

"May I ask what it was?"

"I have been wooing a wife."