

A ROMANCE OF BILLY-GOAT HILL

told! I swore I would n't until after the trial. But you won't breathe it, Miss Lady? Promise you won't even ask me to tell you anything more?"

Miss Lady looked at her strangely.

"I know everybody is going to disapprove," Connie went on recklessly, "and say horrid things about him. But I don't care if you will just stand by me. And you will, won't you?"

Twice Miss Lady tried to speak before the words would come, then:

"Yes," she whispered almost breathlessly, "yes, I promise to stand by you,— and by him."

After Connie had gone she went back to her seat on the railing and stared out into the gathering night. For the first time in her life the dark immensity terrified her. The beacon lights by which she had steered were no longer visible. The great lonely sea of life lay about her, and she had lost her course.

"Daddy!" she whispered in terror, "Daddy. help me!"

But only the faint cry of a whippoorwill in the valley below answered her call. A trembling seized her and feeling her way to the bed where Bertie lay, she crept in beside him, cuddling the soft, warm little body close, and checking her sobs that they might not wake him. Long after the whippoorwill had ceased its plaint, she lay there staring into the darkness, waiting for the dawn.