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ment in their unhappy married life, he  
wondered if he had been wise. After all  
he might have retained Barlow in the  
firm, for he considered the man a valu-  
able servant.

It was Henry Barlow's threat that had  
set his back up, as opposition of every  
description invariably did.

Had Doris pleaded to him, begged him  
to give her time to get over her disap-  
pointment and distress, all might have  
been well. But she had dared him—as  
his horse had done—and the penalty must  
be paid.

"Then you refuse to undo the wrong  
you have done?"

She still stood before him, looking ex-  
quisitely lovely. She was wearing a sim-  
ple gown of some pale-green fabric, which  
threw up the creamy pallor of her face,  
and brought out the tints of her russet-  
brown hair. Yes—she was a wife to be  
proud of! All the county had congratulated  
Armer on possessing such a beautiful wife.

But did he possess her? Might not Doris  
soon find life insupportable and leave him  
to live her own life as best she could?  
The fear this thought engendered sent the  
blood ebbing from his handsome face. But  
it did not alter his determination.

"Yes, I absolutely refuse!"

And then something urged him to ex-  
tenuate his harsh conduct, to set himself  
in a better light before his young wife.

"Believe me, Doris—there were very  
good reasons for my dismissal of Henry  
Barlow."

Her short upper lip curled.

"Ah! as if I didn't know that. You  
were afraid of Barlow!"

Without another word she turned and  
left him.

In her sitting-room she found Henry  
Barlow standing, staring out of the win-  
dow. Had she entered her room a few  
minutes sooner, she would have found  
him busily engaged in turning over the  
contents of her bureau, which stood open  
between the long French windows.

There was a queer, furtive expression  
on the ex-clerk's face, and in his hand he  
clutched a treasury note, which he had  
abstracted from a packet Roger had given  
Doris for current expenses.

Doris could not but own her husband  
was generous in money matters. True, she  
had not her own banking account, or even  
a settled allowance. Only in case of his  
death could she count on any settled  
sum yearly; then she would be a rich  
woman. In the meantime she was obliged  
to come to him for every penny.

Roger had the old-fashioned idea that  
married women should be dependent upon  
their husbands in all things. Another  
sign of tyranny in Doris' eyes!

"Mr Armer," said Doris, "absolutely  
refuses to help you, Mr Barlow. But I  
will do so. I cannot allow—my—Mr  
Armer's injustices to injure all your pro-  
spects."

"God bless you!" Henry Barlow fur-  
tively slipped the note into his pocket.  
"You are one the best. And your father  
was an open-handed gentleman if ever  
there was one. A bit careless in his busi-  
ness; but there—he never thought what  
Mr Armer was up to—never dreamed  
he'd lie as he did."

Doris suddenly stiffened. Somehow  
she did not care to hear her own opinion  
thus crudely expressed by this gaunt-  
looking man, with the furtive expression  
and shifty eyes.

"That will do, Mr Barlow. Mr Armer's  
reason for not assisting you is not quite  
what you seem to believe it to be. He  
hinted that he had other reasons for—all  
he did."

"Ah, madam—he would do that! A man  
doesn't like—"

"Here," said Doris hurriedly, "are  
three pounds. Let me know how you  
get on. Leave me your address. I might  
call and see your wife when I am in  
London."

But, as this would by no means have  
satisfied Barlow, he got out of it by hint-  
ing that they had been sold up, and  
were on the point of changing their  
abode.

A certain feeling of loyalty to her  
husband gripped Doris.

"I should prefer you not telling Mr  
Thoburn what you have told me," she  
said. "If it is necessary for him to  
know—it may not be—I will myself tell  
him."

And, as this exactly suited Henry Bar-  
low, he eagerly acquiesced in Mrs Armer's  
decision. And as he quietly left, Barlow  
congratulated himself on his afternoon's  
work.

"I almost wish I had not pinched that  
note. Had I known she would have  
turned up trumps, I wouldn't have run  
the risk. Never mind—I'll keep my eyes  
open, and spy on 'em both. Mrs Armer  
isn't likely to put up much longer with

Armer's ways. There's money to be made  
out of one of them—maybe out of both."

AN UNNECESSARY SACRIFICE.

After the last encounter of wills be-  
tween the ill-matched couple, a wordless  
truce was declared. Husband and wife  
met as seldom as possible, but they had  
to meet.

The county, in spite of that unpleasant  
scene at Mrs Armer's wedding, were de-  
termined to take up the bride of the  
wealthy financier. Doris got bewildered  
by the number of her callers whom it  
seemed impossible to escape.

Most frequent among them was Isobel  
Vane, who was always agreeable, and  
tactful in ignoring the strained situation  
she was far too sharp not to notice.

Towards Armer's bride she left a bitter  
animosity. Years ago she expected to  
marry Armer and to occupy the position  
held now by Doris.

But for some reason she could not  
fathom, Roger cooled off, and the proposal  
Isobel had longed for and expected was  
never uttered.

The reason for this was locked in  
Roger's heart. Isobel had run after him  
too palpably. He was a born hunter  
was Roger Armer. A woman who showed  
as plainly as Isobel Vane did how madly  
in love she was with him lost all value  
in his eyes.

It was Doris' coldness, and, later on,  
her definite distaste for his society, that  
drew him to her by chains well nigh un-  
breakable, and had led him to do the  
one thing of which, in his inmost heart,  
he was ashamed.

He knew that, had he not acted the lie  
that gave her to him eventually, he would  
never have won Doris Thoburn's consent  
to be his wife.

Isobel, reading her old lover as a book,  
but reading him too late, determined to  
pay Roger out by doing all she could to  
worn herself into the confidence of both,  
gain the secrets of their hearts, and use her  
knowledge to part them.

She did not show her hand at first.  
She made herself useful to Doris, by  
acting as the third person present, and  
so relieved the strain a tete a tete brought  
to husband and wife.

Already Doris began to regret having  
championed Henry Barlow's cause so  
resolutely. For his demands upon her  
purse became more and more insistent, and  
once or twice there was a covert insolence  
in his manner that she quickly resented.

Walking one day in the woods, Isobel  
caught sight of Doris in earnest conversa-  
tion with a queer, shady-looking man.  
Quickly she drew her own conclusions, as  
she saw Doris hand the man an envelope.  
"She is hiding some secret from Roger,"

she told herself. "I wonder what it is?  
I shall have to find out. Either the man  
is some blackmailer of whom she is afraid  
or he is the means of communication be-  
tween her and someone whom Roger does  
not like. I wonder if it is Paul  
Weston?"

By now Miss Vane had discovered that  
Doctor Weston's name was Paul.

"If it is—let her look out! My chance  
will have come, and when the right hour  
arrives I shall not fail to make use of  
it."

"I cannot afford to keep on giving you  
money," Doris told Barlow finally.  
"Should my husband discover that I have  
assisted you against his wishes, he would  
be, naturally, terribly angry."

"I don't think you'd mind much incur-  
ring Mr Armer's anger."

He saw the flush on her face, and  
hastened to correct his error. He fell to  
whining, and the girl relented. It was  
very hard to be poor, with an ailing  
family.

She gave him money, and told him to  
be careful of it, for it might happen she  
would not have so much at her dis-  
posal.

"Roger is getting mean," she told her-  
self, "or else suspicious. He now over-  
looks my accounts—a thing he never did  
before."

Then other matters claimed her at-  
tention, and she forgot Barlow and his in-  
creasing demands. Had she known that  
gambling was now added to Henry Bar-  
low's vices, she would never have robbed  
her dress allowance to provide for her  
husband's victim, for in such light Doris  
persisted in regarding the blackmailer.

(To be Continued).

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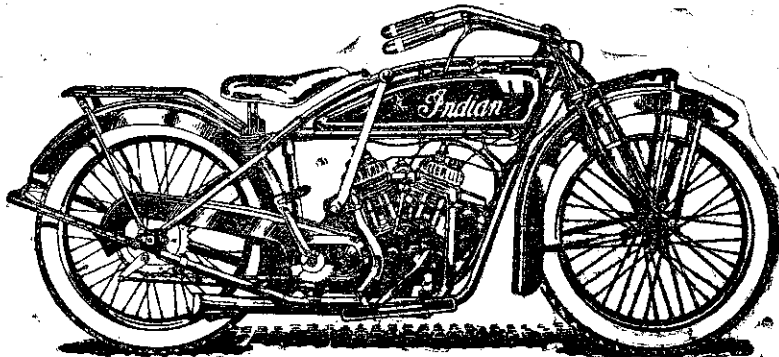
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