

A HOUSE OF CARDS

By M. Woodruff Newell



"Then I shan't stay to take any chances."

CELIA ARMSTRONG awoke suddenly. Confused with sleep, and with a sense that it must be nearly morning, she reached out for the tiny clock on the mahogany table, but the clock, ominously enough, had stopped.

Phillip always wound the clocks. She slipped out of bed, and in the dim light of the one gas jet burning in her dressingroom beyond, she could see that the tiny hands of the timepiece pointed to three.

Three o'clock in the morning and Phillip had not come home! He had not even telephoned.

The clock dropped noisily on the polished floor.

Little Jack, awakened by the noise, whimpered, his little soul affrighted in the heavy stillness of the big house, and she went to him and comforted him.

Afterward she put on her bathrobe and slippers. There was a singing in

her ears. Her pretty childish face was very white; her blue eyes very wide and startled.

Celia thought of a hundred things that might have happened to him. He had been called away suddenly on business; he had been hurt and carried to a hospital—yet, underneath all her surface fears, the real fear—the fear that had been growing from a tiny thing to a great bulk without form or substance for these many weeks, stirred her pulses sluggishly, then more insistently, until it seemed to rise up in her throat and almost strangle her. There was something wrong; there had been something wrong for a long time. Was she to learn now what it was?

Pushing back the heavy, velvet curtains she peered out into the street. It had been raining. A ghostly white fog veiled the houses across the road. A milk wagon went quietly by with a lighted lantern swinging at one side.

The electric light on the corner above flashed and died, and flashed again, showing little shining pools of wind-swept water in the smooth, black, deserted highway.

The world was asleep. Where was Phillip?

These four years of her married life passed in review before her swiftly, like a moving picture. The two had been very happy together. Sometimes Phillip had scolded her because she had wanted some extravagant thing, but always she had won by coaxing. She understood little of the value of money, and Phillip had tried patiently to teach her.

"I am not rich like your father. I never shall be. I haven't the faculty for making money. You must learn to do without things—to live on what I earn."

She remembered that she had sunk at that.

"I will ask father for some; he would—"

But Phillip had turned on her sharply.

"You will never ask your father for one cent, Celia."

Yet finally he had always managed to get her what she wanted, the house they were living in, which he had insisted entailed too high a rent, the two maids, her new fur coat, the big dome in the library—how had he managed to do it? Her fear seized upon the question she had always evaded until now. It grew, and grew, and began to take tangible shape, like the horrible genie in the Arabian Nights tale that rose out of the fisherman's yellow copper vase.

Then a key clicked in a lock, and a second later Phillip came slowly in.

"Phillip," she cried, and choked.

He drew back from her, leaning against the door. For many years afterward she remembered that awful moment as they faced each other.

"It is nearly morning, Phillip. I—I was frightened," she stammered.

"I came near not coming home at all," he said thickly, and he did not lower his voice.

She closed the door into Jack's room.

"I am broke, cleaned out. Fancher got suspicious, and they were working on the books a month before I knew it. If they prosecute, it means ten or twenty years behind bars. How do you like that?" his voice rose.

"How do you like that?"

Stunned, she heard him, without realizing a word that he said.

He did not look like any one she had ever known. His eyes were heavy and dull, his clothes smelled of smoke, and looked as though he had slept in

them. His thick, brown hair was rough on his boyish head.

He pushed on, hotly.

"I could not keep up. I worked like a slave. I spent next to nothing on myself, but bills kept getting ahead of me. I would not beg of your father, so I fixed the books now and then, a little at a time, then more often. There are thousands doing the same every day and not being caught at it; but I am not clever. I am only a fool, an easy mark, and—"

"A thief," she whispered, understanding at last.

"Yes, a thief, but for whom—did I steal?" bitterly. "What have I had out of it? The misery, that's all. I told you I could not afford this house, but you got it, and everything else that you wanted. I never could deny you a thing, Celia. If you had wanted my heart on a salver you could have had it, and you knew it. Weak, yes, but I had taken you from luxury, and I must not let you want for anything. That was my creed. I have kept to it, and now I pay. For myself, I am glad it has all come to an end. I have not slept decently for a year. If it wasn't for you, Celia—"

His lips quivered. He put out his hands boyishly, but she drew back.

"You, a thief!" she said again dully.

"Is that all you feel? Celia—Celia!"

There was no response in her face, only fear and aversion.

"Then I shan't stay to take any chances. Your father will take care of you and Jack. I've failed. If I should ever be able to cover it and start new, Celia, somewhere else—"

still his eyes begged.

But her face did not change. He opened the door.

"I see. We are through. I will never bother you any more. You came too high for me. I should have known, but I didn't. Kiss the boy—"

Then he was gone, slamming the outer door so hard that little Jack awoke and cried.

It was summer before she was well again, and could listen to her father's ultimatum.

"We want you here, daughter, you and Jack. What I have is yours and the boy's, but not Phillip's. I do not know where he has gone, and I do not care. The defalcation is about four thousand. Fancher, to my surprise, has considerable sympathy for him. Her father's voice was grim, and will probably not push the matter. But, as far as you are concerned, it is finished. Next year, when the scandal has died-out, I will apply for a divorce for you."

"No," Celia said stubbornly.

"Why not?"

She could give no reason.

"No," she repeated, and though he cajoled and threatened, she would not agree, and at last the subject was temporarily dropped.

Even to herself she could give no reason. She seemed to be curiously changed these days. The house was not home to her any more. She tried to make herself fit in as of old, but she could not, though she made desperate efforts. She seemed to have outgrown her old ideas. Her mother's showiness irritated her. Her father's prosperity and riches angered her.

The tragedy of Phillip's homecoming that night, his flight, and the fall of their house of cards had awakened her sharply. Every word that he had said was vividly before her now, hour by hour. She could not get away from them.

The summer dragged into autumn, the autumn into winter, the winter into spring again. Gradually, out of loneliness, and misery, and longing, the soul of Celia, the wife and mother, was born anew. She could see clearly where she had tangled the thread of her life and Phillip's; where she had taken advantage of his love for her, of his boyish weakness, and betrayed him for her selfish vanity, for childish tinsel, and glittering, worthless baubles.

But it was too late now. She had made him a thief and an outcast. He would never come back now to face her father. Perhaps if she were by herself he might come, but never here in her old home.

She began to want him with a love that she had never known before. She began to feel the bond between them, stronger now that they were apart than it had been when they were together. Above all, she was Phillip's wife, and Jack was his son. In their foolishness they had made mistakes, he and she; but hers was the greater transgression. Yet she had sent him away without a sign; she had deliberately put the world between them.

The day that it became clear to her, Jack was playing with a new electric railroad in the room beyond, as she called him suddenly.

He came romping into the room.

"Would you like to live in the country, little son?" she asked.

He shook his curly head.

"Can I take my railroad?" he asked doubtfully.

"Perhaps."

"And my wheel?"

"Perhaps."

"Grandpa is going to give me a pony in the spring, he said so."

She took him up into her lap, seeing suddenly just where she stood.

Even Jack was learning fast that he must have everything that he wanted. He was not a poor man's son, Phillip's son—he was a rich man's grandson. Phillip had lost his son as well as his wife.

Blindly now she began her search. For weary hours she walked the crowded streets, her heart in her eyes. Often a gesture, an expression on some passing face, startled her weakly, but it was never Phillip. Perhaps Graham Fancher, Phillip's employer, might know, but she was ashamed to go to him.

One desolate day she met Agnes, the maid of whom she had been fondest, and they talked together a long time. Agnes was married now, and evidently quite content.

"He does not earn much," the girl said simply, "but we do not mind. He is a good boy. The rent is small out in Kensington and cheap, but the country is growing green, and it is lovely."

"May I come to see you?" Celia asked abruptly.

Agnes Johnson grew a rosy red.

"I'd be glad to have you," she said. Celia went eagerly, and there she learned the rest of her lesson.

Agnes' three small rooms were tidy and clean. The good, brown bread was wholesome and sweet. Low wages and high prices on necessities made life a hard and dull thing, but love and companionship added the rose, and the gold and the glory.

Two weeks later Celia settled herself and Jack in the cottage next to her former maid's. A tiny income of her own, left by a dotting grandparent, would not allow of much furnishings, and Jack cried himself to sleep for three nights because the rooms were cold, and there was no deaf, patient nurse to untie his strings and unbutton his buttons.

Her father had grimly given her six months to grow tired of her whim; her mother had given her even less. Celia could not have explained her reasons to them if she had tried. They were too complex.

She had only a blind feeling that now she was where she should be as Phillip's wife—living in humility and poverty. Phillip's child must be brought up as a poor man's son. He must learn to do without, even as she resolved to learn.

Perhaps some day—though she tried desperately to keep the hope down—Phillip might come back. He might forgive her and realize that she was trying to undo the mistakes of the past. But she could never undo them, though she endured patiently. That must be her punishment.

At first Agnes helped her, doing the heaviest of the work, but after a little she dispensed even with this.

Sometimes she was so tired that she could not sleep. Sometimes she was so homesick, so lonely, that the silence of the tiny house almost threw her into a panic; but with a grim tenacity which she had never known before, she held blindly to her purpose.

The red sheen of the maples, and the warm yellow rays of the sun at last dragged June out of her hiding place. Agnes' good husband had made Celia a small garden.

There were potatoes, and turnips and cucumbers, and squash, and corn, and in one corner a happy group of larkspur, and hollyhocks, and golden glow.

As the sun got more power the garden grew and grew, each new bit of green bringing its own message to Celia's re-born soul and clearer understanding.

Jack went wild over it all—from potatoes to golden glow—learning the name of each growing thing in the morning and forgetting it again by night. Mother and son used to stroll around it in solemn triumph together just before Jack's bedtime. One night he had fallen asleep on the last lap and Celia was carrying him—big boy as he was—his yellow head in the warm hollow of her arm, when Agnes came running over.

"Are you here?" she called.

"Why, yes," Celia answered in some surprise.

Then she saw Phillip, standing where Agnes had stood, tall, and gaunt, and pitiful.

"I was afraid to come—I was ashamed, but Agnes said—"

The man's voice broke and she ran to him, and he took them both into his arms—mother and child.

Celia shut her eyes, and opened them again slowly, lest the dream melt into thin air.

"I have made up some of the money now, Celia. Fancher has been as good as gold. I have been working in his Boston office for two months—but I was so homesick for a sight of you—Celia, Celia—"

"I have learned lots of things," she said brokenly. "Oh, how I hated myself when I saw what I had done to you! It was all my fault, Phillip—I know now, I know now."

"Hush, Celia, there was no excuse for me—"

But she smiled at him through her happy tears.

Copyright The People's Home Journal

NEW YORK—DAY-BY-DAY.
(O. O. McIntyre.)

(Special Correspondent of The Dispatch.)

New York, Jan. 7.—As Samuel Pepys would record in his diary: Up betimes and found the city in the grip of the worst cold spell in a half century and many are in dire want for coal and clothing, which seems a great pity.

To a luncheon where there was great talk of a high city official who has fallen in ill repute and it seems that everyone believes the tales against him yet I cannot think them true, albeit I know little of politics.

And a California man made a prophecy that Sir Hiram Johnson would be the next president and Charles Hanson Towne, the poet, was there in the highest pitch of mirth and his mimical tricks the best ever I saw in especial his story of the rough old miner who tried to talk without swearing in the presence of the dominie.

Through the town by coach and saw Charles Dillingham in his captain's uniform and Channing Pollock, the play writer, in a great fur coat and met K. C. Beaton who showed me a long letter he had received from Sir Charles Chaplin who wishes to buy a yacht but fears it would be in bad taste in war time.

Home and find my wife, poor

wretch, distraught over the loss of a neck piece of fur and came Mistress Smith to tell of having lost a gold thimble in a street car and of advertising in the public journals for it and having some 20 thimbles returned which made me hopeful that my advertisement would bring enough fur for a fur coat.

At night to see Mr. Ziegfeld's new roof show which begins at midnight and saw many gay blades of the town, and Mistress Olive Thomas was present with her new husband, Jack Pickford, Mistress Mary's brother, looking radiant. And there was Eva Tanguay wearing the largest bonnet ever I saw. To an apothecary for a breaker of frosted chocolate and so to bed.

The old and well known ballad, "Keep the Home Fires Burning," at last has lost its music. In New York it is no longer a song. It's a desperate shriek. Among the ashes of every man's home or shack are to be found the relics of things which once cluttered up the old home.

Here and there one hears the rip and crash of a forgotten relative's picture, which is skidded into the mid-drift of the hungry open fire, little Willie's ancient and shell battered toys are slammed into the trick heater and everywhere there is an atmosphere indicating that anything may go if the coal fails to arrive.

Pessimists whose eardrums have been tortured for years have adjusted photographs so they fit any furnace and some of the loudest records ever recommended by the singer have given in the flames of the multitude heat and endurance. Golf clubs disappear in a most mysterious manner from talk infested country homes, and hardy a celluloid collar glistens today in the great metropolis.

Nothing is safe. Old receipts, German flags, telephone books, self starters, coats of arms, grass carpets, brown derbies, Christmas neckties and hand-embroidered shirts all go into the open maw. For New York must be kept hot under the collar.

Subdued tango feet have resulted from the war. The noise of the jazz is as raucous in the gilded dancers and there are just as many of the rougely rouged and buoyantly punned females but there is a great paucity of men. They are off to the wars. In seven vaudeville theatres this week interpretive, Greek and folk dancers were featured. They are exponents of

The First Cry

Every woman's sympathy responds to the sweetness of a baby's voice. The little cry that echoes with the arrival of the new baby is perhaps the fondest and most cherished recollection of our lives.

Thousands of mothers owe their preservation to health and strength to the wonderful preparation "Mother's Friend". This is an external application which is applied to the abdominal muscles. It relieves the tension, prevents tenderness and pain at the crisis, and enables the abdomen to expand gently. The muscles contract naturally after baby arrives and the form is thus preserved.

It should be applied daily, night and morning, during the period of expectation. Its influence on the fine network of nerves and ligaments just beneath the skin is wonderful. It renders them pliant, and in this way aids nature to expand the abdomen without the usual strain when baby is born.

You will find this wonderful preparation on sale at every drug store. "Mother's Friend" is prepared by the Bradford-Regulator Co., 200 Lamar Building, Atlanta, Ga. They will send you an intensely interesting book, without charge, "Motherhood and the Baby". Write them to mail it to you. It is of the utmost importance that every expectant mother aid nature in her work. Do not neglect for a single night to use "Mother's Friend". It is absolutely and entirely safe.

DO NOT LEAVE KINKY HAIR

Use **Exelento** which makes hair grow long, soft and silky. All colored people can have nice long, straight hair by using **Exelento** **HAIR GROWING POMADE**.

It is a hair grower, removes dandruff and stops falling hair at once. Every package guaranteed. Accept no false preparation. Ask for Exelento. Price 25c or receipt of stamps or coin.

AGENTS WANTED EVERYWHERE

Write For Particulars **EXELENTO MEDICINE COMPANY** Atlanta, Ga.

Removes superfluous hair from any part of the body. **SAFE AND RELIABLE.**

Large bottle, \$1. Sample, 10c.

MANDO

Sold at booklets free, and Department Stores.

Josephine Le Ferrer Co., Philadelphia, Pa.

SOLE BY **GREEN'S DRUG STORE, 109 Market St.**

KENNY'S CHEON TEA

The Best Tea on Earth

Kenny's High Grade Coffee 25c lb.

Baking Powder. RICE At Cut Price.

C.D. Kenny Co.

Phone 679—16 So. Front

Souvenir Saturdays

GREEN'S AUGUST FLOWER

Has been used for all ailments that are caused by a disordered stomach and inactive liver, such as sick headache, constipation, sour stomach, nervous indigestion, fermentation of food, capitation of the heart caused by gases in the stomach. August Flower is a gentle laxative, regulates digestion both in stomach and intestines, cleans and sweats the stomach and alimentary canal, stimulates the liver to secrete the bile and impurities from the blood. 25 and 75 cent bottles. Sold by Green's Drug Store—adv.

Pyorigg

HIS EYE SKINNED FOR 20 YEARS

Well-known Expert Makes a New Find. New York, N. Y.—T. B. Elker, widely and favorably known throughout the country as an exploiter of new discoveries, announced today, through the Burrell Chemical Co., New York City, that he had found a formula he had been on the lookout for 20 years, which he has reason to believe is an unfailing receding gums, bleeding gums and loose teeth. The new prescription comes in the form of a medicated massage ointment called pyorigg, which stays where it is put, unaffected by saliva, and is being disposed in original packages, price one dollar, at best relie, in Wilmington.

We Specialize in the Manufacture of **Rubber Stamps**

LeGwin Printing Co.

Grace St. Wilmington, N. C.

CANDY FOR WIFE MOTHER SWEETHEART

Before going home tonight to mother or wife, or the visit you contemplate for tomorrow "drop" in and slip a "sun-joy" in your pocket. There will be smiles for the giver and a treat for the recipient.

Fresh Shipment of Delicious Whitman's Candies Just in.

JARMAN & FUTRELL

Phones: 211-212

107 Princess Street.

AUTOS FOR HIRE

—for— Pleasure Driving, Dances Wedding and Commercial

City Livery Co.

Phones 15 and 315.

J. B. McCABE and CO. Certified Public Accountants.

Room 810 Murchison Bank Bldg. Phone 996. WILMINGTON, N. C.

We thank you for your patronage and wish for you a prosperous Next Year.

PAYNE DRUG CO.

HENRY E. PAYNE

SUBURBAN SCHEDULE

IN EFFECT NOVEMBER 19, 1917.

WINTER PARK, WRIGHTSVILLE, WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH

EAST BOUND.			WEST BOUND.		
Leave "Electric Center" for Winter Park	Leave "Electric Center" for Wrightsville	Leave "Electric Center" for Beach	Leave Beach for Wilmington	Leave Wrightsville for Wilmington	Leave Winter Park for Wilmington
6:30 A. M.	6:50 A. M.	7:10 A. M.	6:15 A. M.	6:35 A. M.	6:55 A. M.
7:00 " "	7:20 " "	7:40 " "	7:15 " "	7:35 " "	7:55 " "
7:30 " "	7:50 " "	8:10 " "	7:45 " "	8:05 " "	8:25 " "
8:00 " "	8:20 " "	8:40 " "	8:15 " "	8:35 " "	8:55 " "
8:30 " "	8:50 " "	9:10 " "	8:45 " "	9:05 " "	9:25 " "
9:00 " "	9:20 " "	9:40 " "	9:15 " "	9:35 " "	9:55 " "
9:30 " "	9:50 " "	10:10 " "	9:45 " "	10:05 " "	10:25 " "
10:00 " "	10:20 " "	10:40 " "	10:15 " "	10:35 " "	10:55 " "
10:30 " "	10:50 " "	11:10 " "	10:45 " "	11:05 " "	11:25 " "
11:00 " "	11:20 " "	11:40 " "	11:15 " "	11:35 " "	11:55 " "
11:30 " "	11:50 " "	12:10 " "	11:45 " "	12:05 " "	12:25 " "
12:00 " "	12:20 " "	12:40 " "	12:15 " "	12:35 " "	12:55 " "
12:30 " "	12:50 " "	1:10 " "	12:45 " "	1:05 " "	1:25 " "
1:00 " "	1:20 " "	1:40 " "	1:15 " "	1:35 " "	1:55 " "
1:30 " "	1:50 " "	2:10 " "	1:45 " "	2:05 " "	2:25 " "
2:00 " "	2:20 " "	2:40 " "	2:15 " "	2:35 " "	2:55 " "
2:30 " "	2:50 " "	3:10 " "	2:45 " "	3:05 " "	3:25 " "
3:00 " "	3:20 " "	3:40 " "	3:15 " "	3:35 " "	3:55 " "
3:30 " "	3:50 " "	4:10 " "	3:45 " "	4:05 " "	4:25 " "
4:00 " "	4:20 " "	4:40 " "	4:15 " "	4:35 " "	4:55 " "
4:30 " "	4:50 " "	5:10 " "	4:45 " "	5:05 " "	5:25 " "
5:00 " "	5:20 " "	5:40 " "	5:15 " "	5:35 " "	5:55 " "
5:30 " "	5:50 " "	6:10 " "	5:45 " "	6:05 " "	6:25 " "
6:00 " "	6:20 " "	6:40 " "	6:15 " "	6:35 " "	6:55 " "
6:30 " "	6:50 " "	7:10 " "	6:45 " "	7:05 " "	7:25 " "
7:00 " "	7:20 " "	7:40 " "	7:15 " "	7:35 " "	7:55 " "
7:30 " "	7:50 " "	8:10 " "	7:45 " "	8:05 " "	8:25 " "
8:00 " "	8:20 " "	8:40 " "	8:15 " "	8:35 " "	8:55 " "
8:30 " "	8:50 " "	9:10 " "	8:45 " "	9:05 " "	9:25 " "
9:00 " "	9:20 " "	9:40 " "	9:15 " "	9:35 " "	9:55 " "
9:30 " "	9:50 " "	10:10 " "	9:45 " "	10:05 " "	10:25 " "
10:00 " "	10:20 " "	10:40 " "	10:15 " "	10:35 " "	10:55 " "
10:30 " "	10:50 " "	11:10 " "	10:45 " "	11:05 " "	11:25 " "
11:00 " "	11:20 " "	11:40 " "	11:15 " "	11:35 " "	11:55 " "
11:30 " "	11:50 " "	12:10 " "	11:45 " "	12:05 " "	12:25 " "

SPECIAL FOR SUNDAYS

Leave Front and Princess streets every half hour from 2 to 5 P. M.

Leave Beach every half hour from 2:45 P. M.

*Daily except Sunday. Sunday only.

Beach transfer car connects with this train at Wrightsville. Operated by half-hour schedule Sunday afternoons.

FREIGHT SCHEDULE (DAILY EXCEPT SUNDAY.)

Leave Ninth and Orange Street 3:00 P. M.

Freight Depot open from 2:00 to 2:30 P. M.

SPECIAL NOTICE—This table shows the time at which trains may be expected to arrive at and depart from the several stations, but the arrivals and departures are not guaranteed.

GRAY HAIR? WHITE, FADED?

If Anxious to Have Beautiful Dark Hair Again, Read This.

There is no occasion for you to look prematurely old with gray, prematurely gray, streaked, gray, or white or faded hair. To restore dark color to all your gray hair do this:— Before going to bed rub into your scalp and wet all your gray hair with **LaCreole Hair Dressing**. Soon you will be delighted to observe your gray hair turn to an even, beautiful dark shade, without even a trace of gray showing. **LaCreole** makes all your hair healthy, fluffy, soft, evenly dark and lustrous. This makes you look younger. Try **LaCreole**. It is not a dye, but a harmless, delightful preparation that restores the natural color glands. **LaCreole** is the only Hair Dressing that restores dark color to gray hair by this natural process. Sold by Jarmar and Futrelle Drug Company Wilmington, N. C., or sent direct for \$1.20 on mail orders.

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has this day qualified as Administrator of Maria A. Fosgate, deceased, late of the County of New Hanover. All persons indebted to the estate will please make immediate settlement. All persons holding claims against said estate are hereby notified to present the same to the undersigned at Wilmington, North Carolina, on or before the 4th day of December, 1918, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

This 4th day of December, 1917.

THOMAS W. DAVIS, Administrator of Maria A. Fosgate, deceased.

ROUNTREE and DAVIS, Attorneys.

MANDO

Sold at booklets free, and Department Stores.

Josephine Le Ferrer Co., Philadelphia, Pa.

SOLE BY **GREEN'S DRUG STORE, 109 Market St.**

Try Dispatch Want Ads for The Best Results