

The Third Degree

A NARRATIVE OF METROPOLITAN LIFE

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AND
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ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS

SYNOPSIS.

Howard Jeffries, banker's son, under the evil influence of Robert Underwood, a fellow-student at Yale, leads a life of dissipation, marries the daughter of a gambler who died in prison, and is disowned by his father. He tries to get work and fails. A former college chum makes a business proposition to Howard which requires \$2,000 cash, and Howard is broke. Robert Underwood, who had been repudiated by Howard's father, Annie, in his college days, and had once been engaged to Alicia, Howard's stepmother, has apartments at the Astoria and is apparently in prosperous circumstances. Howard recalls a \$500 loan to Underwood that remains unpaid, and decides to ask him for the \$2,000 he needs.

CHAPTER III.

The handsome townhouse of Howard Jeffries, the well-known banker, on Riverside drive, was one of the most striking among the many imposing millionaire homes that line the city's splendid water front. Houses there were in the immediate proximity which were more showy and had cost more money, but none as completely satisfying from the art lover's standpoint. It was the home of a man who studied and loved the beautiful for its own sake and not because he wanted to astonish people with what miracles his money could work. Occupying a large plot on slightly elevated ground, the house commanded a fine view of the broad Hudson. Directly opposite, across the river, busy with steam and sailing craft, smiled the green slopes of New Jersey; in the purplish north frowned the jagged cliffs of the precipitous Palisades.

The elder Jeffries, aristocratic descendant of an old Knickerbocker family, was proud of his home and had spent large sums of money in beautifying it. Built in colonial style of pure white marble with long French windows and lofty columns supporting a flat, rounded roof, surrounded by broad lawns, wide-spreading shade trees and splashing fountains, it was a conspicuous landmark for miles. The interior was full of architectural beauty. The stately entrance hall, hung with ancestral portraits, was of noble proportions, and a superb staircase, decorated with statuary, led off to tastefully decorated reception rooms above. To-night the house was brilliantly illuminated and there was considerable activity at the front entrance, where a footman in smart livery stood opening the doors of the carriages as they drove up in quick succession.

Mrs. Jeffries' musicales were always largely attended because she knew the secret of making them interesting. Her husband's wealth and her fine house enabled her to entertain on a liberal scale, and she was a tactful and diplomatic hostess as well. She not only cultivated the right kind of people who were congenial to each other, but she always managed to have some guest of special distinction whom every one was eager to meet. Her own wide acquaintance among the prominent operatic artists and her husband's influential position in the world of finance made this policy an easy way of furthering her social ambitions. She would always invite some one whom she could present as the lion of the evening. One week it would be a tenor from the opera house, another time a famous violinist. In this way she managed to create a little artistic salon on the lines of the famous political salons in which the brilliant women of the eighteenth century molded public opinion in France.

Alicia knew she was clever and as she stood admiring herself in front of a full length mirror while awaiting the arrival of her guests she congratulated herself that she had made a success of her life. She had won those things which most women hold dear—wealth and social position. She had married a man she did not love. It was true, but other women had done that before her. If she had not brought her husband love she at least was not a wife he need be ashamed of. In her Paquin gown of gold cloth, with sweeping train and a jeweled tiara in her hair, she considered herself handsome enough to grace any man's home. It was indeed a beauty which she saw in the mirror—the face of a woman not yet 30, with the features regular and refined. The eyes were large and dark and the mouth and nose delicately molded. The face seemed academically perfect, all but the expression. She had a cold, calculating look, and a cynic might have charged her with being heartless, of stopping at nothing to gain her own ends.

To-night Alicia had every reason to feel jubilant. She had secured a social lion that all New York would talk about—no less a person than Dr. Bernstein, the celebrated psychologist, the originator of the theory of scientific psychology. Everything seemed to go the way she wished; her musicales were the talk of the town; her husband had just presented her with the jeweled tiara which now graced her head; there seemed to be nothing in the world that she could not enjoy.

Yet she was not happy, and as she gazed at the face reflected before her in the glass she wondered if the world

guessed how unhappy she was. She knew that by her own indiscretion she was in danger of losing all she had won, her position in society, her place in the affections of her husband, everything.

When she married Mr. Jeffries it was with deliberate calculation. She did not love him, but, being ambitious, she did not hesitate to deceive him. He was rich, he could give her that prominent position in society for which she yearned. The fact that she was already engaged to a man for whom she did care did not deter her for a moment from her set purpose. She had met Robert Underwood years before. He was then a college boy, tall, handsome, clever. She fell in love with him and they became engaged. As she grew more sophisticated she saw the folly of their youthful infatuation. Underwood was without fortune, his future uncertain. While in this uncertain state of mind she met Mr. Jeffries, then a widower, at a reception. The banker was attracted to her and being a business man he did things quickly. He proposed and was accepted, all in the brief time of five minutes. Robert Underwood and the romance of her girlhood were sacrificed without question when it came to reaching a prompt decision. She wrote Underwood a brief letter of farewell, telling him that the action she had taken was really for the best interests of them both. Underwood made no reply and for months did not attempt to go near her. Then he met her in public. There was a reconciliation. He exerted the old spell—on the married woman. Cold and indifferent to her husband, Alicia found it amusing to have her old lover paying her court and the danger of discovery only

pocketed the money, forgetting to account to the owners for the sums they brought. The dealers demanded restitution or a settlement and Underwood, dreading exposure, had to hustle around to raise enough money to make up the deficiency in order to avoid prosecution. In this way he lived from day to day borrowing from Peter to settle with Paul, and on one or two occasions he had not been ashamed to borrow from Mrs. Jeffries herself.

Alicia lent the money more because she feared ridicule than from any real desire to oblige Underwood. She had long since become disgusted with him. The man's real character was now plainly revealed to her. He was an adventurer, little better than a common crook. She congratulated herself on her narrow escape. Suppose she had married him—the horror of it! Yet the next instant she was filled with consternation. She had allowed him to become so intimate that it was difficult to break off with him all at once. She realized that with a man of that character the inevitable must come. There would be a disgraceful scandal. She would be mixed up in it, her husband's eyes would be opened to her folly, it might ruin her entire life. She must end it now—once for all. She had already given him to understand that their intimacy must cease. Now he must stop his visits to her house and desist from trapping her friends into his many schemes. She had written him that morning forbidding him to come to the house this evening. She was done with him forever.

These thoughts were responsible for the frown on the beautiful Mrs. Jeffries' bejeweled brow that particular Saturday evening. Alicia gave a sigh and was drawing on her long kid gloves before the glass, when suddenly a maid entered and tendered her mistress a note. Alicia knew the handwriting only too well. She tore the letter open and read:

Dear Mrs. Jeffries: I received your letter telling me that my presence at your house to-night would be distasteful to you. As you can imagine, it was a great shock. Don't you understand the harm this will do me? Everybody will notice my absence. They will jump to the conclusion that there has been a rupture, and my credit will suffer immediately with your friends. I cannot afford to let this happen now. My affairs are in such condition that it will be fatal to me. I need your support and friendship more than ever. I have noticed for some time

had ended it now, before it was too late. There might have been a scandal, and that she must avoid at any cost. Mr. Jeffries, she felt certain, would not tolerate a scandal of any kind.

All at once she felt something brush her cheek. She turned quickly. It was her husband who had entered the room quietly.

"Oh, Howard," she exclaimed, peevishly; "how you frightened me! You shouldn't startle me like that."

A tall, distinguished-looking man with white mustache and pointed beard stood admiring her in silence. His erect figure, admirably set off in a well-cut dress coat suggested the soldier.

"What are you doing alone here, dear?" he said. "I hear carriages outside. Our guests are arriving."

"Just thinking, that's all," she replied, evasively.

He noticed her preoccupied look and, with some concern, he demanded: "There's nothing to worry you, is there?"

"Oh, no—nothing like that," she said, hastily.

He looked at her closely and she averted her eyes. Mr. Jeffries often wondered if he had made a mistake. He felt that this woman to whom he had given his name did not love him, but his vanity as much as his pride prevented him from acknowledging it, even to himself. After all, what did he care? She was a companion, she graced his home and looked after his creature comforts. Perhaps no reasonable man should expect anything more. Carelessly, he asked:

"Whom do you expect to-night?"

"Oh, the usual crowd," replied Alicia, languidly. "Dr. Bernstein is coming—you know he's quite the rage just now. He has to do with psychology and all that sort of thing."

"So, he's your lion to-night, is he?" smiled the banker. Then he went on:

"By the by, I met Brewster at the club to-night. He promised to drop in."

Now it was Alicia's turn to smile. It was not everybody who could boast of having such a distinguished lawyer as Judge Brewster on their calling lists. To-night would certainly be a success—two lions instead of one. For the moment she forgot her worry. "I am delighted that the judge is coming," she exclaimed, her face beaming. "Every one is talking about him since his brilliant speech for the defense in that murder case."

The banker noted his wife's beautiful hair and the white transparency of her skin. His gaze lingered on the graceful lines of her neck and bosom, glittering with precious stones. An exquisite aroma exuding from her person reached where he stood. His eyes grew more ardent and, passing his arm affectionately around her slender waist, he asked:

"How does my little girl like her tiara?"

"It's very nice. Don't you see I'm wearing it to-night?" she replied almost impatiently and drawing herself away.

Before Mr. Jeffries had time to reply there was a commotion at the other end of the reception room, where rich tapestries screened off the main entrance hall. The butler drew the curtains aside.

"Mr. and Mrs. Cortwright," he announced loudly.

Alicia went forward, followed by her husband, to greet her guests.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



She at Least Was Not a Wife He Need Be Ashamed Of.

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K. OF P. GRAND LODGE

THE FORTY-FIRST ANNUAL CONVENTION AT ASHEVILLE
OVER 300 DELEGATES.

OFFICERS FOR ENSUING YEAR

Next Convention Goes to Wilmington
—Officers to Lend Aid in Preparation for Celebration for Founding of Order, Fiftieth Anniversary.

Asheville.—The forty-first annual convention of the North Carolina grand lodge, Knights of Pythias, opened here with a grand lodge session, over 300 delegates being in attendance.

Grand Chancellor A. E. McCausland, of Charlotte, called the session to order, Judge Thomas A. Jones, of this city, delivered the address of welcome, the response thereto being made by Maj. J. G. Baird, of Charlotte.

The officers chosen for the ensuing year are: Alf S. Barnard, Asheville, supreme representative, filling unexpired term of T. S. Franklin; J. L. Scott, Graham, supreme representative for long term; C. C. McLean, Greensboro, grand chancellor; Walker Taylor, Wilmington, grand vice chancellor; Rev. R. B. Owens, Rocky Mount, grand prelate; Henry Powell, Henderson, grand master at arms; W. T. Hollowell, grand keeper of records and seal; John C. Mills, Rutherfordton, grand master of exchequer; S. A. Robinson, Gastonia, grand inner guard; C. H. Hones, Asheville, grand outer guard; Thomas H. Webb, Luke, re-elected member of board of trustees.

Invitations to hold the annual convention were received from Wilmington, Raleigh, Fayetteville and Goldsboro. The invitation from Wilmington was accepted. The supreme representative and grand lodge officers were empowered to lend their aid in the preparation for the celebration of the founding of the order, February 19, 1914, being the fiftieth anniversary.

The "Dokies" had their big parade. The parade, a torchlight affair, started from the Battery Park at 8 o'clock and passed over the principal streets. Thousands of people viewed the parade from the streets. There was plenty of "fresh meat" in line and ridiculous placards told the throngs that they were about to cross the hot parade there was a D. O. K. K. ceremonial and then a banquet.

Lutheran Conference at Hickory

Assembled in fourth annual session for the mutual benefit of teachers, the normal school for Sunday school workers of the North Carolina Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Synods of Tennessee and North Carolina will convene at Lenoir college, Hickory, July 24, continuing through the 27th.

Cotton Mill Destroyed by Fire

Rockingham.—The Avalon mills at Mayodan, Rockingham county, were totally destroyed by fire of unknown origin, entailing a loss of \$250,000.

The fire started in the machinery room, and as the village is without fire fighting apparatus, the flames met no resistance.

Catawba For Central Highway

Newton.—Catawba county is now definitely and officially committed to the central highway. Attorney W. C. Feimster, one of the committee on the highway, has received from three of the county commissioners, including Chairman S. L. Rhyne, assurances that they will redily vote for the appropriation of \$50 a mile, as provided for by the highway act. The other two commissioners will doubtless make the proposition unanimous as soon as the opportunity presents itself. Two of the commissioners, who have written Mr. Feimster in response to his letter of inquiry, express a preference for the Mooresville route and all will contend for the location of the route through Newton and Hickory.

Monroe.—The County Bankers' association will hold its annual convention at Wrightsville Beach on the 9th and 10th of August.

What Christian Endeavors Want.

Spencer.—The State Christian Endeavor union, of which Rev. Dr. R. E. Steele of Spencer is president, is making strong efforts to double the number of societies in the state and win an increase medal to be given at the great international convention in Atlantic City July 6 to 13. A large number of delegates from North Carolina will attend the convention. The state president is on the program for two addresses and will preside at a part of the session. Dr. Steele is transportation agent.

One Township Will Spend \$10,000. Asheville.—Mr. E. C. Chambers, president of the Buncombe County Good Roads association, received a telephone message from Mr. F. M. Riddle at Mars Hill, saying that the people of Mars Hill township had decided to expend \$10,000 towards the construction of the proposed central highway. No particulars, however, were received as to how the decision was reached or how the money was to be raised, by bond issue or private subscription. The news, nevertheless, was gratifying.

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