



The Machine

Upton Sinclair

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THE MACHINE

By Upton Sinclair

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CHARACTERS

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JACK BULLEN: a parlor Socialist.

LAURA HEGAN: Hegan's daughter.

ALLAN MONTAGUE: a lawyer.

JIM HEGAN: the traction king.

ANNIE ROBERTS: a girl of the slums.

ROBERT GRIMES: the boss.

ANDREWS: Hegan's secretary.

PARKER: a clerk.

ACT I

Julia Patterson's apartments in a model tenement on the lower East Side.

ACT II

Library at "The Towers," Hegan's country place on Long Island, two weeks later.

ACT III

Hegan's private office in Wall street, the next morning.

THE MACHINE

ACT I

[JULIA PATTERSON'S apartments in a model tenement on the lower East Side. The scene shows the living-room, furnished very plainly, but in the newest taste; "arts and crafts" furniture, portraits of Morris and Ruskin on the walls; a centre table, a couple of easy-chairs, a divan and many book-shelves. The entrance from the outer hall is at centre; entrance to the other rooms right and left.]

[At rise: JULIA has pushed back the lamp from the table and is having a light supper, with a cup of tea; and at the same time trying to read a magazine, which obstinately refuses to remain open at the right place. She is an attractive and intelligent woman of thirty. The doorbell rings.]

JULIA. Ah, Jack! [Presses button, then goes to the door.]

JACK. [Enters, having come upstairs at a run. He is a college graduate and volunteer revolutionist, one of the organizers of the "Society of the Friends of Russian Freedom"; handsome and ardent, eager in manner, and a great talker.] Hello, Julia. All alone?

JULIA. Yes. I expected a friend, but she can't come until later.

JACK. Just eating?

JULIA. I've been on the go all day. Have something.

JACK. No; I had dinner. [As she starts to clear things away.] Don't stop on my account.

JULIA. I was just finishing up. [As he begins to help.] No; sit down.

JACK. Nonsense. Let the men be of some use in the world.

JULIA. What have you been up to to-day?

JACK. We're organizing a demonstration for the Swedish strikers.

JULIA. It's marvelous how those Swedes hold on, isn't it?

JACK. The people are getting their eyes open. And when they're once open, they stay open.

JULIA. Yes. Did you see my article?

JACK. I should think I did! Julia, that was a dandy!

JULIA. Do you think so?

JACK. I do, indeed. You've made a hit. I heard a dozen people talking about it.

JULIA. Indeed?

JACK. You've come to be the champion female muck-raker of the country, I think.

[JULIA laughs.]

JACK. Why did you want to see me so specially tonight?

JULIA. I've a friend I want you to meet. Somebody I'm engaged in educating.

JACK. You seem to have chosen me for your favorite proselytizer.

JULIA. You've seen things with your own eyes, Jack.

JACK. Yes; I suppose so.

JULIA. And you know how to tell about them. And you've such an engaging way about you...nobody could help but take to you.

JACK. Cut out the taffy. Who's your friend?

JULIA. Her name's Hegan.

JACK. A woman?

JULIA. A girl, yes. And she's coming right along, Jack. You must take a little trouble with her, for if we can only bring her through, she can do a lot for us. She's got no end of money.

JACK. No relative of Jim Hegan, I hope?

JULIA. She's his daughter.

JACK. [With a bound.] What!

JULIA. His only daughter.

JACK. Good God, Julia!

JULIA. What's the matter?

JACK. You know I don't want to meet people like that.

JULIA. Why not?

JACK. I don't care to mix with them. I've nothing to say to them.

JULIA. My dear Jack, the girl can't help her father.

JACK. I know that, and I'm sorry for her. But, meantime, I've got my work to do...

JULIA. You couldn't be doing any better work than this. If we can make a Socialist of Laura Hegan...

JACK. Oh, stuff, Julia! I've given up chasing after will-o'-the-wisps like that.

JULIA.—But think what she could do!

JACK. Yes. I used to think what a whole lot of people could do. You might as well ask me to think what her father could do... if he only wanted to do it, instead of poisoning the life-blood of the city, and piling up his dirty millions. Go about this town and see the misery and horror... and think that it's Jim Hegan who sits at the top and reaps the profit of it all! It's Jim Hegan who is back of the organization... he's the real power behind Boss Grimes. It's he who puts up the money and makes possible this whole regime of vice and graft...

JULIA. My dear boy, don't be silly.

JACK. How do you mean? Isn't it true?

JULIA. Of course it's true... but why declaim to me about it? You forget you are talking to the champion female muckraker of the country.

JACK. Yes, that's right. But I don't want to meet these people socially. They mean well, a lot of them, I suppose; but they've been accustomed all their lives to being people of importance... to have everybody stand in awe of them, because of their stolen money, and all the wonderful things they might do with it if they only would.

JULIA. My dear Jack, did you ever observe anything of the tuft-hunter in me?

JACK. No, I don't know that I have. But it's never too late.

JULIA. [Laughing.] Well, until you do, have a little faith in me! Meet Laura Hegan, and judge for yourself.

JACK. [Grumbling.] All right, I'll meet her. But let me tell you, I don't propose to spare her feelings. She'll get things straight from me.

JULIA. That's all right, my boy. Give her the class war and the Revolution with a capital R! Tell her you're the only original representative of the disinherited proletariat, and that some day, before long, you intend to plant the red flag over her daddy's palace.

[Seriously.] Of course, what you'll actually do is meet her like a gentleman, and tell her of some of your adventures in Russia, and give her some idea of what's going on outside of her little Fifth avenue set. JACK. Where did you run on to her?

JULIA. I met her at the settlement.

JACK. Good Lord! Jim Hegan's daughter! [Laughs.] They were toadying to her there, I'll wager.

JULIA. Well, you know what settlement people are. She's been coming there for quite a while, and seems to be interested. She's given them quite a lot of money.

JACK. No doubt.

JULIA. I had a little talk with her one afternoon. She's a quiet, self-contained girl, but she gave me a peculiar impression. She seemed to be unhappy; there was a kind of troubled note in what she said. I had felt uncomfortable about meeting her... you can imagine, after my study of "Tammany and the Traction Trust."

JACK. Did she mention that?

JULIA. No, she never has. But I've several times had the feeling that she was trying to get up the courage to do it. I've thought, somehow, that she must be suffering about her father.

JACK. My God! Wouldn't it be a joke if Nemesis were to get at Jim Hegan through his daughter?

JULIA. Yes; wouldn't it!

JACK. How do you suppose he takes her reform activities?

JULIA. I don't know, but I fancy they must have had it out. She's not the sort of person to let herself be turned back when her mind's made up.

JACK. A sort of chip of the old block. [After a pause.] If I'd known what was up, I wouldn't have suggested asking anybody else to come.. .

JULIA. Oh, that's all right; it won't make any difference.

JACK. This chap, Montague, that I 'phoned to you about... he's a sort of a convert of my own.

JULIA. I see. We'll reciprocate.

JACK. I think I've got Montague pretty well landed. You'll be interested in him... it's quite a story. It was last election day...

[The bell rings.]

JULIA. Ah, there's somebody. [She goes to the door; calls.] Is that you, Miss Hegan?

LAURA. [Off.] Yes, it's I.

JULIA. You found your way, did you?

LAURA. Oh, no trouble at all. [Enters, a tall, stately girl, about twenty-three; simply but elegantly clad.] How do you do?

JULIA. I am so glad to see you. Jack, this is Miss Hegan. Mr. Bullen.

LAURA. How do you do, Mr. Bullen?

JACK. I am very glad to meet you, Miss Hegan.

JULIA. Let me take your things.

LAURA. [Looking about.] Oh, what a cozy place! I think these model tenements are delightful.

JULIA. They're indispensable to us agitators... an oasis in a desert.

JACK. Built for the proletariat, and inhabited by cranks.

LAURA. Is that the truth?

JULIA. It's certainly the truth about this one. Below me are two painters and a settlement worker, and next door is a blind Anarchist and a Yiddish poet.

LAURA. What's the reason for it?

JULIA. [Going to room off left with LAURA's things.] The places are clean and cheap; and whenever the poor can't pay their rent, we take their homes.

JACK. The elimination of the unfit.

LAURA. It sounds like a tragic explanation; but I guess it's true. [Looking at Jack.] And so this is Mr. Bullen. For such a famous revolutionist, I expected to find some one more dangerous-looking.

JULIA. [Returning.] Don't make up your mind too soon about Jack. He's liable to startle you.

LAURA. I'm not easily startled any more. I'm getting quite used to meeting revolutionists.

JACK. You don't call them revolutionists that you meet at the settlement, I hope?

LAURA. No; but all sorts of people come there.

JULIA. By the way, Jack 'phoned me this afternoon, and said he'd invited a friend here. I hope you don't mind.

LAURA. Why, no; not at all. Is it one of your Russian friends?

JACK. Oh, no; he's an American. His name is Montague. I was just starting to tell Julia about him when you came in.

LAURA. Go ahead.

JACK. It was quite an adventure. I don't know that I've ever had one that was more exciting. And I've had quite some, you know.

LAURA. Yes; I've been told so.

JACK. It was last election day, in a polling place on the Bowery. I was a watcher for the Socialists, and this Montague was one of the watchers for the reform crowd. The other one was drunk, and so he had the work all to himself. It was in the heart of Leary's district, and the crowd there was a tough one, I can tell you. It was a close election.

LAURA. Yes; I know.

JACK. There'd been all kinds of monkey-work going on, and the box was full of marked and defective ballots, and Montague set to work to make them throw them out. I didn't pay much attention at first. I was only there to see that our own ballots were counted; but pretty soon I began to take interest. He had every one in the place against him. There was a Tammany inspector of elections and four tally clerks... all in with Tammany, of course. There were three or four Tammany policemen, and, outside of the railing, the worst crowd of toughs that ever you laid eyes on. To make matters worse, there were several men inside who had no business to be there... one of them a Judge of the City Court, and another a State's attorney... and all of them storming at Montague.

JULIA. What did he do?

JACK. He just made them throw out the marked ballots. They were willing enough to put them to one side, but wanted to count them in on the tally sheets. And, of course, Montague knew perfectly well that if they ever counted them in they'd close up at the end, and that would be all there was to it. He had the law with him, of course. He's a lawyer himself, and he seemed to know it all by heart; and he'd quote it to them, paragraph by paragraph, and they'd look it up and find that

he was right, and, of course, that only made them madder. The old Judge would start up in his seat. "Officer!" he'd shout (he was a red-faced, ignorant fellow... a typical barroom politician), "I demand that you put that man out of here." And the cop actually laid his hand on Montague's shoulder; if he'd ever been landed on the other side of that railing the crowd would have torn him to pieces. But the man stayed as cool as a cucumber. "Officer," he said, "you are aware that I am an election official, here under the protection of the law; and if you refuse me that protection you are liable to a sentence in State's prison." Then he'd quote another paragraph.

JULIA. It's a wonder he ever held them.

JACK. He did it; he made them throw out forty-seven ballots... and thirty-eight of them were Tammany ballots, too. There was one time when I thought the gang was going to break loose, and I sneaked out and telephoned for help. Then I came back and spoke up for him. I wanted them to know there'd be one witness. You should have seen the grateful look that Montague gave me.

LAURA. I can imagine it.

JULIA. And how did it end?

JACK. Why, you see, we kept them there till eleven o'clock at night, and by that time everybody knew that Tammany had won, and the ballots were not needed. So the old Judge patted us on the back and told us we were heroes, and invited us out to get drunk with him. Montague and I walked home together through the election din, and got acquainted. I don't know that I ever met a man I took to more quickly.

LAURA. You are making a Socialist out of him, of course?

JACK. Oh, he's coming on. But he is not the sort of man to take his ideas from any one else... he wants to see for himself. He hasn't been

in New York long, you know... he comes from the South... from Mississippi.

LAURA. [Startled.] From Mississippi! What's his first name?

JACK. Allan.

LAURA. [Betraying emotion.] Allan Montague!

JACK. Do you know him?

LAURA. Yes; I know him very well, indeed. Oh... I didn't... that is... I have not seen him for a long time. [Recovering her poise.] Is he surely coming?

JACK. He generally keeps his engagements.

JULIA. How did you come to know him?

LAURA. He's Ollie Montague's brother.

JACK. Who's Ollie Montague?

LAURA. He's one of those pretty boys that everybody knows in society; he brought his brother up from the South to introduce him. He was in some business deal or other with my father. Then he seemed to drop out of everything, and nobody sees him any more. I don't know why.

JACK. I think he was disgusted with his experiences.

LAURA. Oh!

JACK. [Realizing that he had said something awkward.] I think I was the first Socialist he'd ever met. He had just gotten to the stage of despair. He'd started out with a long program of reforms... and he was going to educate the people to them... one by one, until he'd made them all effective. I said to him: "By the time you've got the

attention of the public on reform number thirty... what do you suppose the politicians will have been doing with reform number one?"

JULIA. We all have to go through that stage. I can remember just as well... [A ring upon the bell.] Ah, there he is.

JACK. [Rises and goes to the door.] But I think he's most through butting his head against the stone wall! [Calls.] Are you there, old man?

MONTAGUE. [Off.] I'm here!

JACK. How are you?

MONTAGUE. Fine!

JACK. Come right in.

MONTAGUE. [Enters; a tall, handsome man of thirty; self-contained and slow of speech; the dark type of a Southerner.] I'm a trifle late. [Sees LAURA; starts.] Miss Hegan! You! [Recovers himself.] Why... an unexpected pleasure!

LAURA. Unexpected on both sides, Mr. Montague.

MONTAGUE. I'm delighted to meet you, really!

[They shake hands.]

JACK. Julia, my friend, Mr. Montague. Miss Patterson.

MONTAGUE. I'm very glad to meet you, Miss Patterson.

JULIA. We had no idea we were bringing old friends together.

MONTAGUE. No; it was certainly a coincidence.

LAURA. It's been... let me see... a year since we've met.

MONTAGUE. It must be fully that.

LAURA. Where do you keep yourself these days?

MONTAGUE. Oh, I'm studying, in a quiet way.

LAURA. And none of your old friends ever see you?

MONTAGUE. I don't get about much.

LAURA. [Earnestly.] And friendship means so little to you as that?

MONTAGUE. I... it would be hard to explain. I have been busy with politics...

[A pause of embarrassment.]

JULIA. Mr. Bullen has just been telling us about your heroism.

MONTAGUE. My heroism? Where?

JULIA. At the polling place.

MONTAGUE. Oh, that! It was nothing.

LAURA. It seemed like a good deal to us.

MONTAGUE. Make him tell you about some of his own adventures.

JULIA. Would you ever think, to look at his innocent countenance, that he had helped to hold a building for six hours against Russian artillery?

LAURA. Good heavens! Where was this?

JULIA. During the St. Petersburg uprising.

LAURA. And weren't you frightened to death?

JACK. [Laughing.] No; we were too busy taking pot-shots at the

Cossacks. It was like the hunting season in the Adirondacks.

LAURA. And how did it turn out?

JACK. Oh, they were too much for us in the end. I got away, across the ice of the Neva... I had the heel of one shoe shot off. And yet people tell us romance is dead! Anybody who is looking for romance, and knows what it is, can find all he wants in Russia.

[Pause.]

LAURA. [To MONTAGUE.] Have you seen my father lately?

MONTAGUE. No; not for some time.

LAURA. You may see him this evening. He promised to call for me.

MONTAGUE. Indeed!

JACK. Oh, by the way, Julia, I forgot! How's Annie?

LAURA. Oh, yes; how is she?

JULIA. She's doing well, I think. Better every day.

LAURA. Is she still violent?

JULIA. Not so much. I can always handle her now.

LAURA. Is she in the next room?

[Looking to the right.]

JULIA. Yes. She's been asleep since afternoon.

LAURA. And you still won't let me send her to a hospital?

JULIA. Oh, no. Truly, it would kill the poor girl.

LAURA. But you... with all your work, and your engagements?

JULIA. She's very quiet. And the neighbors come in and help when I'm out. They all sympathize.

LAURA. Talking about heroism... it seems to me that you are entitled to mention.

JULIA. Why, nonsense!... the girl was simply thrown into my arms.

LAURA. Most people would have managed to step out of the way, just the same. You've heard the story, have you, Mr. Montague?

MONTAGUE. Bullen has told it to me. You haven't been able to get any justice?

JACK. From the police? Hardly! But we're keeping at it, to make the story complete. I went to see Captain Quinn to-day. "What's this?" says he. "Annie Rogers again? Didn't your lady friend get her pitcher in the papers over that case? An' what more does she want?"

JULIA. I went this afternoon to see the Tammany leader of our district...

MONTAGUE. Leary?

JULIA. The same. I went straight into his saloon. "Lady," says he, "the goil's nutty! You got a bughouse patient on your bands! This here talk about the white-slave traffic, ma'am... it's all the work o' these magazine muckrakers!" "Meaning myself, Mr. Leary?" said I, and he looked kind of puzzled. I don't think he knew who I was.

MONTAGUE. All the work of the muckrakers! I see Boss Grimes is out to that effect also.

JACK. And I see that half a dozen clergymen sat down to a public banquet with him the other day. That's what we've come to in New York! Bob Grimes, with his hands on every string of the whole infamous system... with his paws in every filthy graft-pot in the city!

Bob Grimes, the type and symbol of it all! Every time I see a picture of that bulldog face, it seems to me as if I were confronting all the horrors that I've ever fought in my life!

JULIA. It's curious to note how much less denunciation of Tammany one hears now than in the old days.

MONTAGUE. Tammany's getting respectable.

JACK. The big interests have found out how to use it. The traction gang, especially...

[He stops abruptly; a tense pause.]

LAURA. [Leaning toward him, with great earnestness.] Mr. Bullen, is that really true?

JACK. That is true, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. Mr. Bullen, you will understand what it means to me to hear that statement made. I hear it made continually, and I ask if it is true, and I am told that it is a slander. How am I to know? [A pause.] Would you be able to tell me that you know it of your own personal knowledge?

JACK. [Weighing the words.] No; I could not say that.

LAURA. Would you say that you could prove it to a jury?

JACK. I would say, that if I had to prove it, I could get the evidence.

LAURA. What would you say, Mr. Montague?

MONTAGUE. I would rather not say, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. Please! Please! I want you to answer me.

MONTAGUE. [After a pause.] I would say that I shall be able to prove

it very shortly.

LAURA. How do you mean?

MONTAGUE. I have been giving most of my time to a study of just that question, and I think that I shall have the evidence.

LAURA. I see.

[She sinks back, very white; a pause; the bell rings.]

JULIA. Who can that be?

JACK. [Springing up.] Let me answer it. [Presses button; then, to MONTAGUE.] I had no idea you were going in for that, old man.

MONTAGUE. This is the first time I have ever mentioned it to any one.

JULIA. [Rising, hoping to relieve an embarrassing situation.] I hope this isn't any more company.

JACK. [To MONTAGUE, aside.] You must let me tell you a few things that I know. I've been running down a little story about Grimes and the traction crowd.

MONTAGUE. Indeed! What is it?

JACK. I can't tell it to you now... it would take too long. But, gee! If I can get the evidence, it'll make your hair stand on end! It has to do with the Grand Avenue Railroad suit.

MONTAGUE. The one that's pending in the Court of Appeals?

JACK. Yes. You see, Jim Hegan stands to lose a fortune by it, and I've reason to believe that there's some monkey-work being done with the Court. It happens that one of the judges has a nephew... a dissipated chap, who hates him. He's an old college friend of mine, and he's trying to get some evidence for me.

MONTAGUE. Good Lord!

JACK. And think, it concerns Jim Hegan personally.

[A knock at the door.]

JULIA. I'll go.

[Opens the door.]

HEGAN. [Without.] Good evening. Is Miss Hegan here?

LAURA. [Standing up.] Father!

JULIA. Won't you come in?

HEGAN. Thank you. [Enters; a tall, powerfully built man, with a square jaw, wide, over-arching eyebrows, and keen eyes that peer at one; a prominent nose, the aspect of the predatory eagle; a man accustomed to let other people talk and to read their thoughts.] Why, Mr. Montague, you here?

MONTAGUE. Mr. Hegan! Why, how do you do?

LAURA. We stumbled on each other by chance. Father, this is Miss Patterson.

HEGAN. I am very pleased to meet you, Miss Patterson.

JULIA. How do you do, Mr. Hegan?

[They shake hands.]

LAURA. And Mr. Bullen.

BULLEN. [Remaining where he is; stiffly.] Good evening, Mr. Hegan.

HEGAN. Good evening, sir. [Turns to LAURA.] My dear, I finished up downtown sooner than I expected, and I have another conference at

the house. I stopped off to see if you cared to come now, or if I should send back the car for you.

LAURA. I think you'd best send it back.

JULIA. Why, yes... she only just got here.

HEGAN. Very well.

JULIA. Won't you stop a minute?

HEGAN. No. I really can't. Mr. Grimes is waiting for me downstairs.

LAURA. [Involuntarily.] Mr. Grimes!

HEGAN. Yes.

LAURA. Robert Grimes?

HEGAN. [Surprised.] Yes. Why?

LAURA. Nothing; only we happened to be just talking about him.

HEGAN. I see.

JACK. [Aggressively.] We happen to have one of his victims in the next room.

HEGAN. [Perplexed.] One of his victims?

JULIA. [Protesting.] Jack!

JACK. A daughter of the slums. One of the helpless girls who have to pay the tribute that he...

[A piercing and terrifying scream is heard off right.]

JULIA. Annie!

[Runs off.]

HEGAN. What's that?

[The screams continue.]

JULIA. [Off.] Help! Help!

[Jack, who is nearest, leaps toward the door; but, before he can reach it, it is flung violently open.]

ANNIE. [Enters, delirious, her bare arms and throat covered with bruises, her hair loose, and her aspect wild; an Irish peasant girl, aged twenty.] No! No! Let me go!

[Rushes into the opposite corner, and cowers in terror.]

JULIA. [Following her.] Annie! Annie!

ANNIE. [Flings her off, and stretches out her arms.] What do you want with me? Help! Help! I won't do it! I won't stay! Let me alone!

[Wild and frantic sobbing.]

JULIA. Annie, dear! Annie! Look at me! Don't you know me? I'm Julia! Your own Julia! No one shall hurt you... no one!

ANNIE. [Stares at her wildly.] He's after me still! He'll follow me here! He won't let me get away from him! Oh, save me!

JULIA. [Embracing her.] Listen to me, dear. Don't think of things like that. You are in my home... nothing can hurt you. Don't let these evil dreams take hold of you.

ANNIE. [Stares, as if coming out of a trance.] Why didn't you help me before?

JULIA. Come, dear... come.

ANNIE. It's too late... too late! Oh... I can't forget about it!

JULIA. Yes, dear. I know...

ANNIE. [Seeing the others.] Who?...

JULIA. They are all friends; they will help you. Come, dear... lie down again.

ANNIE. Oh, what shall I do?

[Is led off, sobbing.]

JULIA. It will be all right, dear.

[Exit; a pause.]

HEGAN. What does this mean?

JACK. [Promptly and ruthlessly.] It means that you have been seeing the white-slave traffic in action.

HEGAN. I don't understand.

JACK. [Quietly, but with suppressed passion.] Tens of thousands of girl slaves are needed for the markets of our great cities... for the lumber camps of the North, the mining camps of the West, the ditches of Panama. And every four or five years the supply must be renewed, and so the business of gathering these girl-slaves from our slums is one of the great industries of the city. This girl, Annie Rogers, a decent girl from the North of Ireland, was lured into a dance hall and drugged, and then taken to a brothel and locked in a third-story room. They took her clothing away from her, but she broke down her door at night and fled to the street in her wrapper and flung herself into Miss Patterson's arms. Two men were pursuing her... they tried to carry her off. Miss Patterson called a policeman... but he said the girl was insane. Only by making a disturbance and drawing a crowd was my friend able to save her. And now, we have been the rounds... from the sergeant at the station, and the police captain, to the Chief of Police

and the Mayor himself; we have been to the Tammany leader of the district... the real boss of the neighborhood... and there is no justice to be had anywhere for Annie Rogers!

HEGAN. Impossible!

JACK. You have my word for it, sir. And the reason for it is that this hideous traffic is one of the main cogs in our political machine. The pimps and the panders, the cadets and maquereaux... they vote the ticket of the organization; they contribute to the campaign funds; they serve as colonizers and repeaters at the polls. The tribute that they pay amounts to millions; and it is shared from the lowest to the highest in the organization... from the ward man on the street and the police captain, up to the inner circle of the chiefs of Tammany Hall... yes, even to your friend, Mr. Robert Grimes, himself! A thousand times, sir, has the truth about this monstrous infamy been put before the people of your city; and that they have not long ago risen in their wrath and driven its agents from their midst is due to but one single fact... that this infamous organization of crime and graft is backed at each election time by the millions of the great public service corporations. It is they...

MONTAGUE. [Interfering.] Bullen!

JACK. Let me go on! It is they, sir, who finance the thugs and repeaters who desecrate our polls. It is they who suborn our press and blind the eyes of our people. It is they who are responsible for this traffic in the flesh of our women. It is they who have to answer for the tottering reason of that poor peasant girl in the next room!

LAURA. [Has been listening to this speech, white with horror; as the indictment proceeds, she covers her face with her hands; at this point she breaks into uncontrollable weeping.] Oh! I can't stand it!

HEGAN. [Springing to her side.] My dear!

LAURA. [Clasping him.] Father! Father!

HEGAN. My child! I have begged you not to come to these places! Why should you see such things?

LAURA. [Wildly.] Why should I not see them, so long as they exist?

HEGAN. [Angrily.] I won't have it. This is the end of it! I mean what I say! Come home with me!... Come home at once!

LAURA. With Grimes? I won't meet that man!

HEGAN. Very well, then. You need not meet him. I'll call a cab, and take you myself. Where are your things?

LAURA. [Looking to the left.] In that room.

HEGAN. Come, then.

[Takes her off.]

JACK. [Turns to MONTAGUE, and to JULIA, who appears in doorway at right.] We gave it to them straight that time, all right!

[CURTAIN]

ACT II

Library of "The Towers," HEGAN's Long Island country place. A spacious room, furnished luxuriously, but with good taste. A large table, with lamp and books in the centre, and easy-chairs beside it. Up stage are French windows leading to a veranda, with drive below; a writing desk between the windows. Entrance right and left. A telephone stand left, and a clock on wall right. [At rise: ANDREWS, standing by the table, opening some letters.]

LAURA. [Enters from veranda.] Good afternoon, Mr. Andrews.

ANDREWS. Good afternoon, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. Has father come yet?

ANDREWS. No; he said he'd be back about five.

LAURA. Is he surely coming?

ANDREWS. Oh, yes. He has an important engagement here.

LAURA. He's working very hard these days.

ANDREWS. He has a good deal on his mind just now.

LAURA. It's this Grand Avenue Railroad business.

ANDREWS. Yes. If it should go against him, it would confuse his plans very much.

LAURA. Is the matter never going to be decided?

ANDREWS. We're expecting the decision any day now. That's why he's so much concerned. He has to hold the market, you see...

LAURA. The decision's liable to affect the market?

ANDREWS. Oh, yes... very much, indeed.

LAURA. I see. And then...

'Phone rings.

ANDREWS. Excuse me. Hello! Yes, this is Mr. Hegan's place. Mr. Montague? Why, yes; I believe he's to be here this afternoon. Yes.. . wait a moment... [To LAURA.] It's some one asking for Mr. Montague.

LAURA. Who is it?

ANDREWS. Hello! Who is this, please? [TO LAURA.] It's Mr. Bullen.

LAURA. Mr. Bullen? I'll speak to him. [Takes 'phone.] Hello, Mr. Bullen! This is Miss Hegan. I'm glad to hear from you. How are you? Why, yes, Mr. Montague is coming out... I expect him here any time. He was to take the three-five... just a moment. [Looks at clock.] If the train's on time, he's due here now. We sent to meet him. Call up again in about five minutes. Oh, you have to see him? As soon as that? Nothing wrong, I hope. Well, he couldn't get back to the city until after six. Oh, then you're right near us. Why don't you come over?... That's the quickest way. No; take the trolley and come right across. I'll be delighted to see you. What's that? Why, Mr. Bullen! How perfectly preposterous! My father doesn't blame you for what happened. Don't think of it. Come right along. I'll take it ill of you if you don't... truly I will. Yes; please do. You'll just have time to get the next trolley. Get off at the Merrick road, and I'll see there's an auto there to meet you. Very well. Good-bye. [TO ANDREWS.] Mr. Andrews, will you see there's a car sent down to the trolley to meet Mr. Bullen?

ANDREWS. All right.

[Exit.]

LAURA. [Stands by table, in deep thought, takes a note from table and studies it; shakes her head.] He didn't want to come. He doesn't want to talk to me. But he must! Ah, there he is. [Sound of a motor heard. She waits, then goes to the window.] Ah, Mr. Montague!

MONTAGUE. [Enters centre.] Good afternoon, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. You managed to catch the train, I see.

MONTAGUE. Yes. I just did.

LAURA. It is so good of you to come.

MONTAGUE. Not at all. I am glad to be here.

LAURA. I just had a telephone call from Mr. Bullen.

MONTAGUE. [Starting.] From Bullen?

LAURA. Yes. He said he had to see you about something.

MONTAGUE. [Eagerly.] Where was he?

LAURA. He was at his brother's place. I told him to come here.

MONTAGUE. Oh! Is he coming?

LAURA. Yes; he'll be here soon.

MONTAGUE. Thank you very much.

LAURA. He said it was something quite urgent.

MONTAGUE. Yes. He has some important papers for me.

LAURA. I see he made a speech last night that stirred up the press.

MONTAGUE. [Smiling.] Yes.

LAURA. He is surely a tireless fighter.

MONTAGUE. It's such men as Bullen who keep the world moving.

LAURA. And do you agree with him, Mr. Montague?

MONTAGUE. In what way?

LAURA. That the end of it all is to be a revolution.

MONTAGUE. I don't know, Miss Hegan. I find I am moving that way. I used to think we could control capital. Now I am beginning to suspect that it is in the nature of capital to have its way, and that if the people wish to rule they must own the capital.

LAURA. [After a pause.] Mr. Montague, I had to ask you to come out and see me, because I'd promised my father I would not go into the city again for a while. I've not been altogether well since that evening at Julia's.

MONTAGUE. I am sorry to hear that, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. It's nothing, but it worries my father, you know. [pause.] I thought we should be alone this afternoon, but I find that my father is coming and... and Mr. Baker is coming also. So I mayn't have time to say all I wished to say to you. But I must thank you for coming.

MONTAGUE. I was very glad to come, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. I can appreciate your embarrassment at being asked to...

MONTAGUE. No!

LAURA. We must deal frankly with each other. I know that you did not want to come. I know that you have tried to put an end to our friendship.

MONTAGUE. [Hesitates.] Miss Hegan, let me explain my position.

LAURA. I think I understand it already. You have found evil conditions which you wish to oppose, and you were afraid that our friendship might stand in the way.

MONTAGUE. [In a low voice.] Miss Hegan, I came to New York an entire stranger two years ago, and my brother introduced me to his rich friends. By one of them I was asked to take charge of a law case. It was a case of very great importance, which served to give me an opening into the inner life of the city. I discovered that, in their blind struggle for power, our great capitalists had lost all sense of the difference between honesty and crime. I found that trust funds were being abused... that courts and legislatures were being corrupted... the very financial stability of the country was being wrecked. The thing shocked me to the bottom of my soul, and I set to work to give the public some light on the situation. Then, what happened, Miss Hegan? My newly made rich friends cut me a deal; they began to circulate vile slanders about me... they insulted me openly, on more than one occasion. So, don't you see?

LAURA. Yes. I see. But could you not have trusted a friendship such as ours?

MONTAGUE. I did not dare.

LAURA. You saw that you had to fight my father, and you thought that I would blindly take his side.

MONTAGUE. [Hesitating.] I... I couldn't suppose...

LAURA. Listen. You have told me your situation; now imagine mine. Imagine a girl brought up in luxury, with a father whom she loves very dearly, and who loves her more than any one else in the world. Everything is done to make her happy... to keep her contented and peaceful. But as she grows up, she reads and listens... and, little by little, it dawns upon her that her father is one of the leaders in this

terrible struggle that you have spoken of. She hears about wrongdoing; she is told that her father's enemies have slandered him. At first, perhaps, she believes that. But time goes on... she sees suffering and oppression... she begins to realize a little of cause and effect. She wants to help, she wants to do right, but there is no way for her to know. She goes to one person after another, and no one will deal frankly with her. No one will tell her the truth... absolutely no one! [Leaning forward with intensity.] No one! No one!

MONTAGUE. I see.

LAURA. So it was with you... and with our friendship. I knew that you had broken it off for such reasons. I knew that there was nothing personal... it was nothing that I had done...

MONTAGUE. No! Surely not!

LAURA. [Gazes about nervously.] And then the other night... you told me you were investigating the traction companies of New York... their connection with politics, and so on. Ever since then I have felt that you were the one person I must talk with. Don't you see?

MONTAGUE. Yes; I see.

LAURA. I have sought for some one who will tell me the truth. Will you?

MONTAGUE. [In a low voice.] You must realize what you are asking of me, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. I have not brought you here without realizing that. You must help me!

MONTAGUE. Very well. I will do what I can.

LAURA. [Leaning forward.] I wish to know about my father. I wish to know to what extent he is involved in these evils that you speak of.

MONTAGUE. Your father is in the game, and he has played it the way the game is played.

LAURA. Has he been better than the others, or worse?

MONTAGUE. About the same, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. He has been more successful than they.

MONTAGUE. He has been very successful.

LAURA. You were concerned in some important deal with my father, were you not?

MONTAGUE. I was.

LAURA. Then you withdrew. Was that because there was something wrong in it?

MONTAGUE. It was, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. There were corrupt things done?

MONTAGUE. There were many kinds of corrupt things done.

LAURA. And was my father responsible for them?

MONTAGUE. Yes.

LAURA. Directly?

MONTAGUE. Yes; directly.

LAURA. Then my father is a bad man? MONTAGUE. [After a pause.] Your father finds himself in the midst of an evil system. He is the victim of conditions which he did not create.

LAURA. Ah, now you are trying to spare me!

MONTAGUE. No. I should say that to any one. I am at war with the system... not with individuals. It is the old story of hating the sin and loving the sinner. Your father's rivals are just as reckless as he take Murdock, for instance, the man who is behind this Grand Avenue Railroad matter. It is hard for a woman to understand that situation.

LAURA. I can understand some things very clearly. I go down into the slums and I see all that welter of misery. I see the forces of evil that exist there, defiant and hateful... the saloons and the gambling-houses, and that ghastly white-slave traffic, of which Annie Rogers is the victim. And there is the political organization, taking its toll from all these, and using it to keep itself in power. And there is Boss Grimes, who is at the head of all... and he is one of my father's intimate associates. I ask about it, and I am told that it is a matter of "business." But why should my father do business with a man whose chief source of income is vice?

MONTAGUE. That is not quite the case, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. Doesn't the vice tribute go to him?

MONTAGUE. Part of it does, I have no doubt. But it would be a very small part of his income.

LAURA. What then?

MONTAGUE. The vice graft serves for the police and the district leaders and the little men; what really pays nowadays is what has come to be called "honest graft."

LAURA. What is that?

MONTAGUE. The business deals that are trade with the public service corporations.

LAURA. Ah! That is what I wish to know about!

MONTAGUE. For instance, I am running a street railway...

LAURA. [Quickly.] My father is running them all!

MONTAGUE. Very well. Your father is in alliance with the organization; he is given franchises and public privileges for practically nothing; and in return he gives the contracts for constructing the subways and street-car lines to companies organized by the politicians. These companies are simply paper companies... they farm out the contracts to the real builders, skimming off a profit of twenty or thirty per cent. One of these companies received contracts last year to the value of thirty million dollars.

LAURA. And so that is how Grimes gets his money?

MONTAGUE. Grimes' brother is the president of the company I have reference to.

LAURA. I see; it is a regular system.

MONTAGUE. It is a business, and there is no way to punish it... it does not violate any law...

LAURA. And yet it is quite as bad!

MONTAGUE. It is far worse, because of its vast scope. It carries every form of corruption in its train. It means the prostitution of our whole system of government... the subsidizing of our newspapers, and of the great political parties. It means that judges are chosen who will decide in favor of the corporations; that legislators are nominated who will protect them against attack. It means everywhere the enthronement of ignorance and incompetence, of injustice and fraud.

LAURA. And in the end the public pays for it?

MONTAGUE. In the end the public pays for everything. The stolen

franchises are unloaded on the market for ten times what they cost, and the people pay their nickels for a wretched, broken-down service. They pay for it in the form of rent and taxes for a dishonest administration. Every struggling unfortunate in the city pays for it, when he comes into contact with the system... when he seeks for help, or even for justice. It was that side of it that shocked me most of all... I being a lawyer, you see. The corrupting of our courts...

LAURA. The judges are bought, Mr. Montague?

MONTAGUE. The judges are selected, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. Selected! I see.

MONTAGUE. And that system prevails from the Supreme Court of the State down to the petty Police Magistrates, before whom the poor come to plead.

LAURA. And that is why the white-slave traffic goes unpunished!

MONTAGUE. That is why.

LAURA. And why no one would move a hand for Annie Rogers!

MONTAGUE. That is why.

LAURA. And my father is responsible for it!

MONTAGUE. [Gravely.] Yes; I think he is, Miss Hegan.

A PAUSE.

LAURA. Have you seen Julia Patterson lately?

MONTAGUE. I saw her last night.

LAURA. And how is Annie?

MONTAGUE. She... [Hesitates.] She is dead.

LAURA. [Starting.] Oh!

MONTAGUE. She died the night before last.

LAURA. [Stares at him, then gives a wild start, and cries] She... she...

MONTAGUE. She killed herself.

LAURA. Oh!

MONTAGUE. She cut her throat.

LAURA. [Hides her face and sinks against the table, shuddering and overcome.] Oh, the poor girl! The poor, poor girl! [Suddenly she springs up.] Can't you see? Can't you see? It is things like that that are driving me to distraction!

MONTAGUE. [Starting toward her.] Miss Hegan...

LAURA. [Covering her face again.] Oh! oh! It is horrible! I can't stand it! I...

[Sound of motor heard; they listen.]

LAURA. That is my father's car... Mr. Montague, will you excuse me? I must have a talk with my father...

MONTAGUE. Certainly. Let me go away...

LAURA. No; please wait. Just take a little stroll. I...

MONTAGUE. Certainly, I understand.

[Exit right.]

LAURA. [Seeks to compose herself; then goes to window.] Father!

HEGAN. [Off.] Yes, dear.

LAURA. Come here.

HEGAN. [Enters.] What is it?

LAURA. Father, I have just had dreadful news..

HEGAN. What?

LAURA. Annie Rogers... that poor girl, you know...

HEGAN. Yes.

LAURA. She has killed herself.

HEGAN. No!

LAURA. She cut her own throat.

HEGAN. Oh, my dear! [Starts toward her.] I am so sorry...

LAURA. [Quickly.] No, father! Listen! You must talk to me... you must talk to me this time!

HEGAN. My child...

LAURA. You cannot put me off. You cannot, I tell you!

HEGAN. Laura, dear, you are upset...

LAURA. No! That is not so! I have perfect control of myself. There is

no use crying... the girl is dead. That can't be helped. But I mean to understand about it. I mean to know who is responsible for her death.

HEGAN. My dear, these evils are hard to know of...

LAURA. That house to which that girl was taken... there is a law against such places, is there not?

HEGAN. Yes, my dear.

LAURA. And why is not the law enforced?

HEGAN. It has not been found possible to enforce such laws.

LAURA. But why not?

HEGAN. Why, my dear, this evil...

LAURA. These people pay money to the police, do they not?

HEGAN. Why, yes; I imagine...

LAURA. Don't tell me what you imagine... tell me what you know! They pay money to the police, don't they?

HEGAN. Yes.

LAURA. Then why should the police not be punished? Do those who control the police get some of the money?

HEGAN. Some of them, my dear.

LAURA. That is, the leaders of Tammany.

HEGAN. Possibly... yes.

LAURA. And Mr. Grimes... he gets some of it?

HEGAN. Why, my dear...

LAURA. Tell me!

HEGAN. But really, Laura, I never asked him what he gets.

LAURA. [With intensity.] Father, you must understand me! I will not be trifled with... I am in desperate earnest! I am determined to get to the bottom of this thing! I am no longer a child, and you must not try to deceive me! Mr. Grimes must get some of that money!

HEGAN. I think it possible, my dear.

LAURA. And do you get any?

HEGAN. Good God, Laura!

LAURA. Then what is the nature of your relationship with Grimes?

HEGAN. Really, my child, this is not fair of you. I have business connections which you cannot possibly understand...

LAURA. I can understand everything that you are willing for me to understand! I want to know why you must have business connections with a man like Boss Grimes.

HEGAN. My dear, I think you might take your father's word in such a case. It has nothing to do with vice, I can assure you. Grimes is a business ally of mine. He is a rich man, a great power in New York...

LAURA. Do you help to keep him a power in New York?

HEGAN. Why, I don't know...

LAURA. Do you contribute to his campaign funds?

HEGAN. Why, Laura! I am a Democrat. Surely I have a right to support my party!

LAURA. [Quickly.] Have you ever contributed to the Republican

campaign funds?

HEGAN. [Disconcerted; laughs.] Why... really...

LAURA. Please answer me.

HEGAN. I am a Gold Democrat, my dear.

LAURA. I see. [She Pauses.] You put Mr. Grimes in the way of making a great deal of money, do you not?

HEGAN. I do that.

LAURA. He is interested in companies that you give contracts to?

HEGAN. Really! You seem to be informed about my affairs!

LAURA. I have taken some trouble to inform myself. Father, don't you realize what it means to corrupt the government of the city in this way?

HEGAN. Corrupt the government, my dear?

LAURA. Does not Grimes have the nominating of judges and legislators?

HEGAN. Why, yes... in a way...

LAURA. And does he not consult with you?

HEGAN. Why, my dear...

LAURA. Please tell me.

HEGAN. [Realizing that he cannot make any more admissions.] No, my dear.

LAURA. Never?

HEGAN. Absolutely never.

LAURA. He has never made any attempt to influence the courts in your favor?

HEGAN. Never.

LAURA. Not in any way, father?

HEGAN. Not in any way.

LAURA. Nor in favor of your companies?

HEGAN. No, my dear.

LAURA. You mean, you can give me your word of honor that that is the truth?

HEGAN. I can, my dear.

LAURA. And that none of your lawyers do it? Do you mean that the courts escape your influence...

HEGAN. [Laughing disconcertedly.] Really, my dear, this is as bad as a Government investigation! I shall have to take refuge in a lapse of memory.

LAURA. [Intensely.] Father! Is it nothing to you that I have the blood of that poor girl on my conscience?

HEGAN. My child!

LAURA. Yes; just that! She was caught in the grip of this ruthless system; it held her fast and crushed her life out. And we maintain this system! I profit by it... all this luxury and power that I enjoy comes from it directly! Can't you see what I mean?

HEGAN. I see, my dear, that you are frightfully overwrought, and that you are making yourself ill. Can't you imagine what it means to me to have you acting in this way? Here I am at one of the gravest crises of

my life; I am working day and night, under frightful strain... I have hardly slept six hours in the past three days. And here, when I get a chance for a moment's rest, you come and put me through such an ordeal! You never think of that!

LAURA. It's just what I do think of! Why must you torture yourself so? Why...

HEGAN. My dear, I, too, am in the grip of the system you speak of.

LAURA. But why? Why stay in it? Haven't we money enough yet?

HEGAN. I have duties by which I am bound... interests that I must protect. How can I... [A knock.] Come in!

ANDREWS. [Enters.] Here are the papers, Mr. Hegan. They must be signed now if they're to catch this mail.

HEGAN. All right.

[Sits at desk up stage and writes.]

LAURA. [Stands by table, staring before her; picks up book carelessly from table.] "Ivanhoe"... [Fingers it idly and a slip of paper falls to floor. She picks it up, glances at it, then starts.] Oh!.. . [Reads.] "Memo to G., two hundred thousand on Court deal. GRIMES." Two hundred thousand on Court deal! [Glances back at her father; then replaces slip and lays book on table.] Father, have you read "Ivanhoe"?

HEGAN. [Without looking up.] I'm reading it now. Why? Do you want it?

LAURA. No; I just happened to notice it here.

HEGAN. [Looks up sharply, watches her, then finishes writing.] There! [Rises; the sound of a motor heard.] What's that?

ANDREWS. [Near window.] It's Mr. Grimes.

LAURA. [Starting.] Grimes!

HEGAN. [TO ANDREWS.] Bring him in.

[ANDREWS exit.]

LAURA. Father! Why do you bring that man here?

HEGAN. I'll not do it again, dear. I didn't realize. He happened to be in the neighborhood...

LAURA. I won't meet him!

HEGAN. [Putting his arm about her.] Very well, dear; come away. Try to stop worrying yourself now, for the love of me...

[Leads her off left.]

ANDREWS. [At window.] This way, Mr. Grimes.

[GRIMES enters; a powerfully built, broad-shouldered man of about fifty, with a massive jaw, covered with a scrubby beard; the face of a bulldog; a grim, masterful man, who never speaks except when he has to. He enters and seats himself in a chair by the table.] Will you have a cigar? [Grimes takes a cigar, without comment, and chews on it; sits, staring in front of him.] Mr. Hegan will be here directly, Sir.

[He nods, and ANDREWS exit. GRIMES continues to chew and stare in front of him. He is not under the necessity of making superfluous motions.]

HEGAN. [Enters left.] Hello, Grimes!

GRIMES. Hello!

HEGAN. [Betraying anxiety.] Well?

GRIMES. It's done.

HEGAN. What?

GRIMES. It's done.

HEGAN. Good! [Grimes nods.] How did you manage it?

GRIMES. [Grimly.] I put my hand on 'em!

HEGAN. Which one? Porter? [GRIMES nods.] Oh, the old hypocrite! What did you offer him? Cash? [GRIMES shakes his head slowly.] What?

GRIMES. Discipline!

HEGAN. [Perplexed.] But... a judge!

GRIMES. When a man's once mine, he stays mine... no matter if it's a life job I give him.

MEGAN. But are you sure it's safe?

GRIMES. The decision comes tomorrow.

HEGAN. [Starting.] What?

GRIMES. Tomorrow noon.

HEGAN. But how can they write the decision?

GRIMES. They'll adopt the minority opinion.

HEGAN. Oh! I see!

[Chuckles.]

GRIMES. You be ready.

MEGAN. Trust me! I'll have to go in now.

GRIMES. It'll be a great killing. Old Murdock has plunged up to his neck!

HEGAN. I know! We'll lay them flat. I'll get ready. [Rises.] Old Porter! Think of it! When did you see him?

GRIMES. Last night.

HEGAN. I see. I'll be with you.

GRIMES. Just a moment. I'll take the money.

HEGAN. Oh, yes. Why don't you let me hold it and buy for you?

GRIMES. I'll buy for myself.

HEGAN. Very well.

[Sits at desk.]

GRIMES. It's two hundred thousand.

HEGAN. That's right. [Writes a check, rises and gives it to Grimes.] There.

GRIMES. [Studies the check, nods, and puts it away carefully.] When's the next train?

HEGAN. In about ten minutes. [Rings bell.] Andrews!

ANDREWS. [Enters left.] Yes, Sir.

HEGAN. I'm going into town at once. Telephone orders to the house.

ANDREWS. Yes, sir. And shall I come in this evening?

HEGAN. Yes; you'd better. And telephone Mr. Isaacson and Mr. Henry Sterns to meet me at eight o'clock for an important conference at.. . let me see, where?

GRIMES. At my rooms.

HEGAN. Very good. And they're not to fail on any account. It's urgent.

ANDREWS. Yes, sir.

[HEGAN and GRIMES go off centre. ANDREWS remains sorting papers. A knock, right.]

ANDREWS. Come in!

[MONTAGUE enters.]

ANDREWS. Oh, good afternoon. I was looking for you, Mr. Montague. Mr. Bullen has come.

MONTAGUE. Oh! Where is he?

ANDREWS. He's waiting. I'll tell him you're here.

[Exit right.]

MONTAGUE. [Stands at window and sees motor departing.] Grimes! I wonder what that means? [Turns away.] And what a coincidence, that I should be here! Humph! Well, it's not my doings. Ah! Bullen!

JACK. [Enters, right, in great excitement.] Montague!

MONTAGUE. Yes.

JACK. I've got 'em!

MONTAGUE. What?

JACK. I've got 'em!

MONTAGUE. You don't mean it!

JACK. Got 'em dead! Got everything! There's never been a case like

it!

MONTAGUE. [Gazing about.] Ssh! Where was it?

JACK. At Judge Porter's house.

MONTAGUE. What?

JACK. Yes.... Grimes came there.

MONTAGUE. When?

JACK. Last night. My friend was in the next room... he heard everything!

MONTAGUE. And what are they going to do?

JACK. Porter is to switch over, and sign the minority opinion, and that's to come out as the decision of the Court.

MONTAGUE. Good God! When?

JACK. Tomorrow.

MONTAGUE. Impossible!

JACK. There's to be a meeting of the judges this afternoon. See... here's the decision! [Takes paper from pocket.] The one they mean to kill!

MONTAGUE. [Looks at paper.] Merciful heavens!

JACK. And look here! [Unfolds a paper, which has pasted on it bits of a torn and charred note.] He threw this in the fireplace, and it didn't burn.

MONTAGUE. Bullen!

JACK. In Grimes' own handwriting: "My Dear Porter—I will call"... you

can see what that word was... "at eight-thirty. Very urgent." How's that?

MONTAGUE. Man, it's ghastly! [A pause.] How did you manage to get these?

JACK. It's a long story.

MONTAGUE. How did Grimes work it? Money?

JACK. Not a dollar.

MONTAGUE. What then?

JACK. Just bluffed him. Party loyalty! What was he named for?

MONTAGUE. But in a suit like this!

JACK. Never was a better test! If Hegan lost this case, he'd be wiped off the slate, and the organization might go down at the next election. And what were you put in for, judge Porter? Don't you see?

MONTAGUE. I see! It takes my breath away!

JACK. [Looking about.] And what a place for us to meet in! Did you see Grimes?

MONTAGUE. Yes.

JACK. I'll wager he came to tell Hegan about it.

MONTAGUE. No doubt of it.

JACK. God! I'd give one hand to have heard them!

MONTAGUE. Don't wish that! It's embarrassing enough as it is!

JACK. [Staring at him.] You'll see it through? You won't back out?

MONTAGUE. Oh, I'll see it through... trust me for that. But it's devilish

awkward!

JACK. Why did you come here?

MONTAGUE. I tried not to. But Miss Hegan insisted.

JACK. [Laughing.] The same here! I was fair caught!

MONTAGUE. And now she'll think we learned it here. I'll have to explain to her...

JACK. What?

MONTAGUE. I Must!

JACK. No! [LAURA appears at windows, centre, and hears the rest, which is in excited tones.] It is not to be thought of!

MONTAGUE. But I can't help it, man! Miss Hegan will think I've been eavesdropping!

JACK. Do you realize what you're proposing, man? You'll ruin everything! We've got Grimes dead... we can land him in jail! But if Hegan heard any whisper of it, they'd balk everything!

MONTAGUE. But how?

JACK. They'd hold up the decision of the Court...

MONTAGUE. Nonsense! With all that they'd stand to lose...

LAURA. [Coming forward.] I beg pardon, Mr. Bullen.

JACK. Oh!

LAURA. I didn't wish to hear what you were saying. But I couldn't help it. I was caught unawares. [The three stare at each other.] It is something that involves my father. [Looking at the papers in BULLEN's hands.] Mr. Bullen has brought you some evidence. Is that

so, Mr. Montague?

MONTAGUE. [In a low voice.] Yes, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. And you wished to take me into your confidence?

MONTAGUE. I wished to make it impossible for you to think we had obtained this evidence in your home.

LAURA. I See.

MONTAGUE. You will do us the justice to recognize that we did not seek admission here.

LAURA. Yes; I do that. [A pause.] All that I can say is, that if you think it best to take me into your confidence, you may trust me to the bitter end.

MONTAGUE. Miss Hegan, Mr. Bullen has brought me evidence which proves that the decision of the Court, which is to be made known tomorrow, has been... improperly affected.

LAURA. [Quickly.] By whom?

MONTAGUE. By Robert Grimes.

LAURA. [Starts wildly.] And the evidence involves my father?

MONTAGUE. Your father will be the chief one to profit from the change.

LAURA. [Sinks back against the table; stares away from them, whispering.] To Grimes... two hundred thousand on Court deal! I see! I see! [Faces them, weakly.] And what... what do you mean to do?

MONTAGUE. I intend to wait until the decision has been announced, which will be tomorrow, and then to call a public meeting and present the evidence.

LAURA. [Starts to implore him; then controls herself.] Yes, yes... that is just. But then... see! It hasn't been done yet!

MONTAGUE. How do you mean?

LAURA. The decision hasn't come out. It could be stopped!

JACK. Why stop it?

LAURA. That would prevent the wrong! I would... oh, I see! You want to expose Grimes! You'd rather it happened!

JACK. The crime has already been committed.

LAURA. And you, Mr. Montague... you prefer it so?

MONTAGUE. I had never thought of any other possibility.

LAURA. Listen! I don't understand the matter very clearly. The Grand Avenue Railroad case...

MONTAGUE. It is an effort to annul a franchise which was obtained by proven bribery.

LAURA. Then, if the public could win, it would be worth while, would it not?

MONTAGUE. It would establish a precedent of vast importance. But how could that be done?

LAURA. We have a hold upon these men... we could compel them to give way!

MONTAGUE. They would never do it, Miss Hegan... they have too much at stake.

LAURA. But... the evidence you have! Mr. Bullen said you could send Grimes to jail.

MONTAGUE. That was just wild talk. Grimes has the district attorney and the courts. He could never be punished for anything.

LAURA. But the exposure!

JACK. He's been exposed a hundred times. What does that matter to him?

LAURA. But then... my father is involved.

JACK. Quite true, Miss Hegan...

LAURA. And I can make him see how wrong it is.

JACK. You can make him see it! But you can't make him do anything!

LAURA. Ah, but you don't know my father... truly, you don't. He does these evil things, but at heart he's a kind and loyal man! And he loves me... I am his only daughter... and I can help him to see what is right. We have always understood each other; he will listen to me as he would not to any one else in the world.

JACK. But what can you say to him? We can't put our evidence in your hands...

LAURA. I don't need your evidence. I must tell you that I, too, have found out something about this case. I know that my father paid Mr. Grimes to influence the decision of that Court. And I know how much he paid him.

MONTAGUE. Miss Hegan!

JACK. Good God!

LAURA. You see, I am not afraid to trust you.... [A pause.] What is the nature of your evidence against Grimes?

MONTAGUE. It comes from an eye-witness of his interview with the

judge.

LAURA. And it is some one you can trust?

MONTAGUE. It's for Bullen to tell you.

JACK. The judge has a nephew, a dissipated chap, whose inheritance he is holding back... and who hates him in consequence. The nephew happens to be a college chum of mine. He witnessed the interview and he brought me the evidence.

LAURA. I see. Then, certainly, I have a case. And don't you see what a hold that gives me upon my father?

JACK. Miss Hegan, you are a brave woman, and I would like to give way to you. But you could accomplish nothing. This suit, which is nominally in the public interest, is really backed by Murdock and his crowd, who are fighting your father; you must realize his position.. . the thousand ties that bind him... all the habits of a lifetime! Think of the friends he has to protect; you don't know...

LAURA. I know it all. And, on the other hand, I know some things that you do not know. I know that my father is not a happy man. There is a canker eating at his heart... the fruit of life has turned to ashes on his lips. And he has one person in all this world that he loves.. . myself. He has toiled and fought for me... all these years he has told himself that he was making his money for me. And now he finds that it brings me only misery and grief... it is as useless to me as it is to him! And now, suppose I should go to him and say: "Father, you have committed a crime. And I cannot stand it another hour. You must choose here and now... you must give up this fight against the people... you must give up this career, and come with me and help me to do good in the world. Or else"... [her voice breaking.]... "I shall have to leave you! I shall refuse to touch a dollar of your money; I shall refuse in any way to share your guilt!" Don't you see? He will know that I am speaking the

truth... and that I mean every word of it. Oh, gentlemen, believe me... my father would be as strong to atone for his injustices as he has been to commit them! Surely, you can't refuse me this chance to save him?

JACK. Miss Hegan...

MONTAGUE. For God's sake, Jack...

JACK. Excuse me, Montague. How long would you expect us to wait, Miss Hegan?

LAURA. You need not wait at all. You could go right ahead with your own plans. Meantime, I can go to my father... I will have tonight to plead with him, and tomorrow morning you will know if I have succeeded.

JACK. Very well... I will consent to that.

LAURA. Let Mr. Montague come to my father's office tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. I shall not give him up... even if I have to follow him there! And now... good-bye... [Starts toward the door, breaks down and cries.] Thank you! Thank you!

[Stretches out her hands to them.]

MONTAGUE. [Springing toward her.] Miss Hegan!

LAURA. Give me a little courage! Tell me you think I shall succeed!

MONTAGUE. [Seizing her hand.] I believe you will, Miss Hegan!

LAURA. Ah! Thank you!

MONTAGUE. [Kisses her hand; tries to speak; overcome.] Good-bye!

LAURA. [Exit.] Ah, God!

JACK. I understand, old man! If only she weren't so rich!

MONTAGUE. If only she weren't...

JACK. Yes, yes, dear boy; I know how it is. You're troubled with a conscience, and yours must be strictly a cottage affair! But forget it just now, old fellow... we've got work before us. Play ball!

[Takes him by the shoulder; they go off.]

[CURTAIN]

ACT III

HEGAN'S office in Wall street. A large room, furnished with severe simplicity. At the left a large table, with half a dozen chairs about it, and a "ticker" near the wall; at the right, a flat-topped desk and a telephone. Entrance centre.

[At rise: ANDREWS stands by desk; takes some papers, looks them over, makes note and replaces them.]

PARKER. [Enters.] Say, Andrews, what's the reply to these letters of the Fourth National?

ANDREWS. Give them here; I'll see to them.

PARKER. Any orders for the brokers this morning?

ANDREWS. I'm writing them myself.

PARKER. Something special, eh? All right. [Looks at ticker.] Hello! Listen to this: "There is a rumor, widely current, that the decision of the Court of Appeals in the matter of the Public vs. the Grand Avenue Railroad Company will be handed down to-day!" Gee whiz, I wonder if that's so?

ANDREWS. I have heard the rumor.

PARKER. There was a reporter here yesterday, trying to pump me. I'll bet they're watching the boss.

ANDREWS. Yes; no doubt of that.

PARKER. Cracky! I'd like to know which way it'll go!

ANDREWS. A good many others would like to know, I've no doubt.

PARKER. I'll bet my hat the boss knows!

ANDREWS. It may be.

[A pause; PARKER continues to read ticker.]

PARKER. I don't suppose you've heard anything, have you?

ANDREWS. I never hear, Parker.

PARKER. Oh, say... come off. Why don't you drop a fellow a hint now and then?

ANDREWS. I can't afford to.

PARKER. It would never go beyond me. [A pause.] Say, Andrews.

ANDREWS. Well?

PARKER. Would you like to invest a bit for me now and then?

ANDREWS. I'm not hankering to, especially.

PARKER. I'll go halves with you on the profits.

ANDREWS. And how about the losses?

PARKER. There wouldn't be any losses.

ANDREWS. Cut it out, Parker... we don't want that kind of a thing in the office. [Handing him paper.] Here... I want three copies of this. And take my advice and live on your salary.

PARKER. Thanks. I wish the salary increased as fast as the bills do! [Starts to door; sees LAURA.] Oh! Good morning, Miss Hegan!

LAURA. [Enters hurriedly.] Good morning.

ANDREWS. Good morning, Miss Hegan.

PARKER exit.

LAURA. Mr. Andrews, where was my father last night?

ANDREWS. He had an important conference...

LAURA. He did not come to the house.

ANDREWS. No, Miss Hegan; it was too late. He stayed downtown...

LAURA. And you were not home, either.

ANDREWS. I was with him.

LAURA. It is too bad! I have been trying all night to find either of you.

ANDREWS. Why... your father had no idea when he left...

LAURA. I know. Something has turned up...

ANDREWS. Nothing wrong, I hope.

LAURA. I must see my father as soon as possible. He will be here this morning?

ANDREWS. Any minute, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. He will surely come?

ANDREWS. Not the slightest doubt of it. Nothing could keep him away.

LAURA. I wish to see him the moment he comes. And if he should call up or send word...

ANDREWS. I will see that he is informed, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. Thank you. [A pause.] The Court decision is expected to-

day, is it not, Mr. Andrews?

ANDREWS. [Hesitates.] There has been a rumor, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. And so there will be considerable disturbance of the market?

ANDREWS. Presumably.

LAURA. And my father has made preparations?

ANDREWS. Yes.

LAURA. That is what the conference was about?

ANDREWS. I presume so, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. By the way, Mr. Andrews, I expect Mr. Montague here at ten o'clock. Please let me know when he comes.

ANDREWS. Yes, Miss Hegan. [Goes to the door, then turns.] Here is Mr. Hegan now.

LAURA. [Starting up.] Ah!

ANDREWS. [Holding open door.] Good morning, Mr. Hegan.

HEGAN. [Enters.] Good morning.

LAURA. Father!

HEGAN. Why, Laura! [ANDREWS exit.] What are you doing here?

LAURA. I've come to have a talk with you.

HEGAN. To have a talk with me?

LAURA. Come in, please, father. Shut the door.

HEGAN. Yes, my dear; but...

LAURA. I came into the city on the next train after you. I have been hunting for you ever since... I have been up all night. I have something of the utmost urgency to talk with you about.

HEGAN. What is it?

LAURA. Come and sit down, please.

HEGAN. Yes, my dear.

LAURA. Listen, father. Yesterday afternoon, when we were talking, you told me that you had never done anything to influence the courts in their decisions.

HEGAN. Yes, Laura.

LAURA. And you told me that nobody else ever did it, either for you or for your companies.

HEGAN. Yes, but...

LAURA. And, father, you told me a falsehood.

HEGAN. Laura!

LAURA. I am very sorry, but I have to say it. It was a falsehood; and it is but one of many falsehoods that you have told me. I understand just why you did it you think I ought not to ask about these things, because it will make me unhappy; and so, for my own good, you do not hesitate to tell me things that are not true.

HEGAN. My child, it is your father that you are talking to!

LAURA. It is my father, and a father who knows that I love him very dearly, and who will realize it hurts me to say these things, fully as much as it hurts him to hear them. But they must be said... and said now.

HEGAN. Why now? Just at this moment...

LAURA. I know what you are going to say. At this moment you are very busy...

HEGAN. My dear, the Exchange will open in an hour. And I am in the midst of a big campaign. I have important orders for my brokers, and a hundred other matters to attend to. And I expect Grimes here any minute...

LAURA. Grimes?

HEGAN. Yes, my dear.

LAURA. You are not through with him yet, then?

HEGAN. No, Laura...

LAURA. Well, even so! Mr. Grimes must wait until I have said what I have to say to you.

HEGAN. What is it, Laura?

LAURA. You are expecting the decision of the Court of Appeals on the Grand Avenue Railroad case at noon today.

HEGAN. Why, yes...

LAURA. The decision will be in your favor. And you and Grimes are planning to gamble on it, and to make a great deal of money.

HEGAN. Yes, my dear.

LAURA. And you paid Grimes two hundred thousand dollars to fix the decision of the Court.

HEGAN. [Starting violently.] Laura!

LAURA. Grimes went to judge Porter's house the night before last

and induced him to change his vote on the case.

HEGAN. Laura!

LAURA. And so, what was to have been the minority opinion of the Court is to be given out today as the Court's decision.

HEGAN. My God!

LAURA. You do not deny that this is the truth?

HEGAN. You overheard us at the house!

LAURA. Not one word, father.

HEGAN. But you must have!

LAURA. Father, throughout this conversation, you may honor me by assuming that I am telling you the absolute truth. And I will be glad when you will give me the same privilege.

HEGAN. Then, how did you learn it?

LAURA. That, unfortunately, I am not at liberty to tell you.

HEGAN. Then other people know it?

LAURA. They do.

HEGAN. Good God! [Stares at her, dumbfounded.] Who are these people?

LAURA. I cannot tell you that.

HEGAN. But, Laura... you must!

LAURA. It is impossible.

HEGAN. But... how can that be?

LAURA. I cannot discuss the matter.

HEGAN. But think... my dear! I am your father, and you must trust me... you must help me...

LAURA. Please do not ask me. I have given my word.

HEGAN. Your word! [Gazes about, distracted.] You take the part of others against your own flesh and blood!

LAURA. Listen, father! Think of me for a minute, and how it seems to me. Do not be so ignoble as to think only of the exposure...

HEGAN. But, my child, realize what it will mean if this comes out! Are these people among my enemies?

LAURA. That depends upon circumstances.

HEGAN. I don't understand you.

LAURA. I will try to explain, if you will be patient with me.

HEGAN. Go on! Go on!

LAURA. Father, you know what has been happening to me during the past few months. You know how unhappy I have been. And now you have committed a crime... a dreadful, dreadful crime!

HEGAN. My dear!

LAURA. I wish to make it clear to you... I am in desperate earnest. I have taken all night to think it over, and I am not making any mistake. I have made up my mind that, come what will, and cost what it may, I must clear myself of the responsibility for these evils.

HEGAN. In what way are you responsible?

LAURA. In every way imaginable. My whole life is based upon them...

everything that I have and enjoy is stained with the guilt of them... the house in which I live, the clothing that I wear, the food that I eat. And I shall never again know what it is to be happy, while I have that fact upon my conscience. Don't you see?

HEGAN. I see.

LAURA. I tried all night to find you. I wanted to have a chance to talk with you, quietly. And, now, instead, I have to do it here, amid all the rush and strain of this dreadful Wall Street. But so it is.. . I must say it here. Father, I have come to plead with you, to plead with you upon my knees. Listen to me... don't turn me away!

HEGAN. What do you wish me to do?

LAURA. First of all, I wish you to give up this illegal advantage that you have gained. I wish you to stop this decision, and give the people the victory to which they are entitled.

HEGAN. But, my dear, that is madness! How can I...

LAURA. You compelled Grimes to do this thing... you can compel him to undo it!

HEGAN. But, my dear, it would ruin me!

LAURA. If you do what I ask you to do, ruin will not matter.

HEGAN. What do you ask me?

LAURA. I wish you to stop this mad career... to give up this money game... to drop it utterly! To stop selling stocks and manipulating markets; to stop buying politicians and franchises... to sell out everything... to withdraw. I want you to do it now... today.. . this very hour!

HEGAN. But, my dear...

LAURA. I want you to come with me, and help me to find happiness again, by doing some good in the world. I want you to use your power and your talents to help people, instead of to destroy them.

HEGAN. My child! That is something very easy to talk about, but not so easy to do!

LAURA. We will work together, and find ways to do it.

HEGAN. It seems possible, from your point of view... with your noble ideals, and your sheltered life...

LAURA. My sheltered life! That is just what I can no longer endure! That I should have ease and comfort, while others suffer... that my father should take part in this mad struggle for money and power, in order to give me a sheltered life! I must make it impossible for that to continue! I must make you understand that all your money is powerless to bring me happiness... that it is poisoning my life as well as your own!

HEGAN. [Gravely.] Laura, I have tried to protect you... that is the natural instinct of a father... to keep evil things from his daughter's knowledge. If I have told you untruths, as you say, that has been the one reason. But since you will not have it so... since you must face the facts of the world...

LAURA. I Must!

HEGAN. Very well, then... you shall face them. You tell me to give up this case... to change back the Court's decision, so that the public may reap the advantage. Do you realize that the public has nothing to do with this suit?... That it is a covert attack upon me by an unscrupulous enemy?

LAURA. You mean Murdock?

HEGAN. Murdock. You know something of his career, perhaps...

something of his private life, too. And if I should turn back, as you ask, the public would gain nothing... he would be the only one to profit. He would raid my securities; he would throw my companies into bankruptcy; he would draw my associates away from me... in the end, he would take my place in the traction field. Is that what you wish to bring about?

LAURA. It is not that that I am thinking of. It is the corrupting of the Court...

HEGAN. The Court! Do you know why Grimes and I had to do what we did?

LAURA. No.

HEGAN. And yet you have judged me! What would you say if I told you that we had information that one of the judges had received a thousand shares of Grand Avenue stock from Murdock? And that another had been promised a seat in the United States Supreme Court by that eminent Republican?

LAURA. Oh! Horrible!

HEGAN. You see what the game is?

LAURA. But, father! The buying and selling of the powers of the Government...

HEGAN. The "Government" consisting of politicians who have gotten themselves elected for the purpose of selling out to the highest bidder. For ten years now I have been in charge of these properties. .. I have had the interests of thousands of investors in my keeping... and all the while I have been like a man surrounded by a pack of wolves. I defended myself as I could... in the end, I found that the best way to defend was by attacking. In other words, I had to go into politics, to make the control of the "Government" a part of my business. Don't

you see?

LAURA. Yes, I see. But why play such a game?

HEGAN. Why? Because it is the only game I have ever known... the only game there is to play. That is the way I have lived my life... the way I have risen to power and command. I played it for myself, and for my friends, and for those I loved.

LAURA. You played it for me! And, oh! father! father!... Can't you see what that means to me? To realize that all my life has been based upon such things! Don't you see how I can't let it go on... how, if you refuse to do what I ask you to, it will be impossible for me to touch a dollar of your money?

HEGAN. Laura!

LAURA. Just that, father! I should never again be able to face my conscience!

HEGAN. [After a pause.] Listen to me, dear. You know that I have always meant to withdraw...

LAURA. I know that. And that has been a confession! You know that you are wrecking your life-wrecking everything! And if you mean to stop, why not stop?

HEGAN. But, my dear, at this moment... in the midst of the battle. ..

LAURA. At this moment you are on the point of doing something that will put a brand upon your conscience for the balance of your career. And at this moment you are confronted with the realization that you are ruining your daughter's life. You see her before you, desperate... frantic with shame and grief. And you have to make up your mind, either to drive her from you, heart-broken... or else to turn your face from these evils, and to take up a new way of life.

HEGAN. [Broken and crushed, sits staring at her.] Laura!

LAURA. [Stretching out her arms to him.] Father! A knock at the door; they start.

GRIMES. [Enters.] Oh! Beg pardon!

HEGAN. Come in.

LAURA. [Starting up.] No!

HEGAN. Come in! You must know it!

GRIMES. What is it?

HEGAN. Shut the door! Grimes, the game is up!

GRIMES. How d'ye mean?

HEGAN. We've been betrayed. Somebody knows all about the Court decision... about what passed between you and Porter, and between you and me!

GRIMES. The hell you say!

HEGAN. We're threatened with exposure!

GRIMES. Who is it?

HEGAN. I don't know.

GRIMES. But, then...

HEGAN. My daughter tells me. But she is not at liberty to give the names.

GRIMES. Well, I'll be damned! [He stares from HEGAN to LAURA; then comes and sits, very deliberately, where he can gaze at them. A long pause; then, nodding toward them.] What's her game?

HEGAN. [Weakly.] She will tell you.

GRIMES. [Looking at her.] Well?

LAURA. I am here to plead with my father to turn back from this wickedness.

GRIMES. [Stares.] And do what, ma'am?

LAURA. Quit Wall Street, and devote himself to some useful work.

GRIMES. [After a pause.] And if he won't?

LAURA. I have told him he must choose between his present career and his daughter's love.

GRIMES. [Gazes at LAURA, then in front of him; slowly shakes his head.] I can't make out our young people. When I was a boy, young women looked up to their parents. What's your father done to you, that you should turn against him?

LAURA. I have not turned against him, Mr. Grimes.

GRIMES. [Indicating HEGAN, who sits in an attitude of despair.] Look at him!

[A pause.]

LAURA. I am pleading with him for his own good... to give up this cruel struggle...

GRIMES. To turn tail and run from his enemies?

LAURA. It is of my duty to the public that I am thinking, Mr. Grimes.

GRIMES. You owe no duty to this world higher than your duty to your father.

LAURA. You think that?

GRIMES. I think it.

LAURA. [Hesitates a moment, then turns.] Father! What do you say? Is that true?

HEGAN. [Crushed.] I don't know, my dear.

GRIMES. God Almighty! And this is Jim Hegan! [To LAURA.] Where'd you get onto these ideas, ma'am?

LAURA. [In a low voice.] I think, Mr. Grimes, it might be best if you did not ask me to discuss this question. Our points of view are too different.

GRIMES. [Shrugs his shoulders.] As you please, ma'am. But you needn't mind me... I ain't easy to offend. And I'm only trying to understand you.

LAURA. [After a silence.] Mr. Grimes, I had the good fortune to be brought up in a beautiful and luxurious home; but not long ago I began to go down into the slums and see the homes of the people. I saw sights that made me sick with horror.

GRIMES. No doubt, ma'am.

LAURA. I found the people in the grip of a predatory organization that had bound them hand and foot, and was devouring them alive.

GRIMES. You've been listening to tales, ma'am. We do a lot for the people.

LAURA. You treat them to free coal and free picnics and free beer, and so you get their votes; and then you sell them out to capitalists like my father.

GRIMES. Humph!

LAURA. You sell them out to any one, high or low, who will pay for the privilege of exploiting them. You sell them to the rum-dealer and the dive-keeper and the gambler. You sell them to the white-slave trader.

GRIMES. There's no such person, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. You offer an insult to my intelligence, Mr. Grimes. I have met with him and his work. There was a girl of the slums... her name was Annie Rogers. She was a decent girl; and she was lured into a dive and drugged and shut up in a brothel, a prisoner. She escaped to the street, pursued, and a friend of mine saved her. And, high and low, among the authorities of this city, we sought for justice for that girl, and there was no justice to be had. Yesterday afternoon I learned that she cut her own throat.

GRIMES. I see.

LAURA. And that happened, Mr. Grimes! It happened in the City of New York! I saw it with my own eyes!

GRIMES. Such things have been, ma'am.

LAURA. And you permit them.

GRIMES. I?

LAURA. You permit them

GRIMES. I can't attempt to discuss prostitution with a lady. Such things existed long before I was born.

LAURA. You could use your power to drive the traffic from the city.

GRIMES. Yes, ma'am; I suppose I could. But if I'd been that sort of a man, do you think I'd ever had the power?

LAURA. How neatly parried! What sort of a man are you, anyway?

GRIMES. [Looks at her fixedly.] I'll tell you the sort of man I am, ma'am. [A pause.] I wasn't brought up in a beautiful, luxurious home. I was brought up with five brothers, in two rooms on the top floor of a rear tenement on Avenue B; I was a little street "mick," and then I was a prize "scrapper," and the leader of a gang. When a policeman chased me upstairs, my mother stood at the head and fought him off with a rolling-pin. That was the way we stood by our children, ma'am; and we looked to them to stand by us. Once, when I was older, my enemies tried to do me... they charged me with a murder that I never done, ma'am. But d'ye think my old father ever stopped to ask if I done it or not, ma'am? Not much. "Don't mention that, Bob, my boy," says he... "it's all part of the fight, an' we're wid yer." [A pause.] I looked about me at the world, ma'am, and I found it was full of all sorts of pleasant things, that I'd never had, and never stood a chance of havin'. They were for the rich... the people on top. And they looked on with scorn... I was poor and I was low, and I wasn't fit for anything. And so I set to climb, ma'am. I shouldered my way up. I met men that fought me; I fought them back, and I won out. That's the sort of man I am.

LAURA. I see. A selfish man, bent upon power at any price! A brutal man, profiting by the weakness of others! An unscrupulous man,

trading upon fear and greed! A man who has stopped at no evil to gain his purpose!

GRIMES. I am what the game has made me.

LAURA. Not so! Not so! Many another man has been born to a fate like yours, and has fought his way up from the pit... to be a tower of strength for goodness and service, an honor to his people and himself.

GRIMES. I've not met any such, ma'am.

LAURA. No; you've not sought for them. You did not need them in your business. The men you needed were the thugs and the criminals, who could stuff ballot-boxes for you... the dive-keepers and the vice-sellers, who would contribute to your campaign funds! And you have dealt with them... you have built up the power they gave you into a mighty engine of corruption and wrong! And you are master of it... you use it to wring tribute from high and low! Selling immunity to dive-keepers and betraying helpless young girls! Naming legislators and judges, and receiving bribes to corrupt the highest Court in the State.

HEGAN. Laura...

LAURA. Father, I did not seek this discussion! He challenged me... and he shall hear the truth! For all these months the thing that has been driving me to desperation has been the knowledge that my father was the business associate and ally of a master of infamy like Robert Grimes!

GRIMES. Thanks, ma'am! And so now he's to break with me!

[A knock at the door.]

ANDREWS. [Enters, centre.] Mr. Hegan, these orders for your brokers must be signed.

HEGAN. I won't sign them!

ANDREWS. Sir?

HEGAN. Never mind them.

GRIMES. [Springing to his feet.] Jim Hegan, you're mad! [TO ANDREWS.] Go out, will you? [ANDREWS exit.] Hegan, man... surely you don't mean this?

HEGAN. Yes... I'm sick of it!

GRIMES. But, man, think of the rest of us!... What are we to do?

HEGAN. You can buy just the same.

GRIMES. But without you? Why, we won't be able to corner Murdock! And if he gets out of this hole, it'll be worse than ever! There'll be hell to pay!

HEGAN. I don't care.

GRIMES. But, man, you've pledged yourself! Look at what Harris has done!... What excuse will you be able to make to him? And what will you tell Henry Stevens?

HEGAN. I'll tell them I've quit.

GRIMES. But you told them last night you were going in with every dollar you could raise! You told Isaacson he could break with Murdock! And now you'll tell them you've turned tail and run! Why, Hegan, it's treason!

HEGAN. Listen to me...

GRIMES. I don't want to listen to you! Half an hour from now you'll be ashamed of yourself... wishing that nobody had heard you! You'll be begging me not to mention it! You... Jim Hegan... the traction king! To

lose your nerve over a little thing like this! What's come over you, anyhow... after all the things we've been through together? Why, man...

[The 'phone rings.]

HEGAN. Hello! Who is it? Oh, Isaacson. Yes; I'll speak with him. Hello, Isaacson! Yes. No; I've not forgotten. I'll do whatever I said I'd do. Er... yes; that's all right. I've been delayed. Yes. I'll get the money to you. Right away. Oh, certainly, that's all right. [Hangs up receiver.] Ah, God!

GRIMES. Hegan, listen here. You're in the midst of a battle. And you're the general. Everything depends on you this morning. And you've a right to be afraid.. but you've no right to let others see it. You've no right... do you understand me? And, by God, I won't let you!... I'll be a man for two of you! Shake yourself together now! [Seizes him.] Come, man! Shake yourself together!

HEGAN. But think of the exposure!

GRIMES. The exposure! And this is Jim Hegan talking! How many times have you been exposed already? And how many times have I been?

HEGAN. But this is different.

GRIMES. How different? We've got the police, and we've got the district attorney, and we've got the courts. What more do we want? What can they do but talk in the newspapers? And is there anything they haven't said about us already? [Takes HEGAN by the arm, and laughs.] Come, old man! As my friend Leary says: "Dis is a nine-day town. If yez kin stand de gaff for nine days, ye're all right!" We'll stand the gaff!

HEGAN. I'm tired of standing it.

GRIMES. Yes, we all get tired now and then. But this afternoon it'll be Murdock that's tired. Think of him, Hegan... try to realize him a bit! You've got him where you want him at last! Remember what he did to you in the Brooklyn Ferry case! Remember how he lied to you in the Third Avenue case! And he told Isaacson, only last week, that he'd never let up on you till he'd driven you out of the traction field!

HEGAN. Did he say that?

GRIMES. He did that! And only yesterday he said he was getting ready to finish you! He's as sure of this Court decision as I am of the sunrise! I'm told he's short already over a quarter of a million shares!

HEGAN. But his judges'll get word to him... he'll buy!

GRIMES. Of course! But that's just why you ought to be busy! Buy first, and make him pay... damn his soul!

ANDREWS. [Knocks and enters.] Mr. Stevens is here, Mr. Hegan.

GRIMES. Henry Stevens? We'll see him. [ANDREWS exit.] Come on, man! We'll go over to your brokers and take the orders. It'll give you a smell of the powder smoke.

LAURA. [AS HEGAN Starts to follow.] Father, you are going with him?

HEGAN. My dear child, what can I do?

LAURA. But think of the disgrace... the shame of it! You will carry it with you all your life!

HEGAN. I can't help it. I am bound hand and foot.

LAURA. Father! [She rushes to him, and flings her arms about him.] Do you realize what you are doing? You are driving me away from you!... You are casting me off! And all for a few more dollars!

HEGAN. My dear, it is not that. My word is pledged.

LAURA. You are trampling me in the dust. You are spurning all that is best in your life!

GRIMES. Come, come, man! The game is called

HEGAN. Let me go, my dear.

LAURA. Father!

HEGAN. No! No! [He gently, but firmly, puts her arms from him.] Good-bye, dear.

LAURA. Father! [HEGAN and GRIMES go out centre; she sinks by the table, and buries her face in her arms, sobbing; after a considerable, interval, a knock on the door, centre.] Come in!

MONTAGUE. [Enters.] Well?

LAURA. I have failed. [Rises and stretches out her arms.] Failed! He has gone with Grimes!

MONTAGUE. I saw him go, Miss Hegan.

LAURA. [Swiftly.] And yet... I have not failed utterly. I have failed to turn back the decision... to save him from this disgrace. But that is not all.

MONTAGUE: How do you mean?

LAURA. I shall not give him up... and, in the end, I shall have my way; I can see that quite clearly. Ah, how I hurt him! I almost broke his heart! And just now he is in the midst of the battle... the rage of it is on him. But, afterwards, he will recollect... he will be overwhelmed with grief! And then he will see! He will do what I have begged him to!

MONTAGUE. Yes... perhaps that is so.

LAURA. I know what my love means to him! I know what he is at heart! And when he sees that I mean to carry out my threat, to go by myself and to refuse to touch his money... that will be more than he can bear, Mr. Montague!

MONTAGUE. You mean to do that?

LAURA. I mean to do it! I mean to do it today; and I will never yield to him... never until he has atoned for this wrong he has done! And don't you see that I will win in the end?

MONTAGUE. Yes; I see.

LAURA. [Quickly.] Understand, that has nothing to do with your course. I am not asking you to spare him. You must go ahead and do your duty... you must do just what you would have done if I had never stood in the way.

MONTAGUE. It is a terrible thing to me, Miss Hegan. I cannot turn back...

LAURA. You must not! You must not think of it! It will be a part of my father's punishment... and he has deserved it. He has prepared that cup, and he must drink it... to the dregs!

MONTAGUE. You can bear it?

LAURA. It is not any question of what I can bear. It is a question of the rights of the people. I saw that quite clearly, as my father talked with me. Whether it is he who wins, or whether it is Murdock, it is always the people that lose. And, let it hurt whom it may, the people must have the truth!

MONTAGUE. And then... you will be able to forgive me! Ah, what a weight you lift from me! I hardly dared to face the thought of what I had to do! [Hesitating.] And then, the thought that you mean to renounce your father's wealth... that you are going out into the world... alone...

LAURA. It will not be hard for me. You cannot know how I have hated my past life. To know that my father has plundered the public... and then to give his money, and call it charity. To be flattered and fawned upon... to be celebrated and admired... and never for anything that I am, but always for my money!

MONTAGUE. I understand what you feel! And see what your decision means to me... it sets me free at last!

LAURA. Free!

MONTAGUE. Free to speak! Miss Hegan, I came to New York, and I met these rich people, and I saw how their fortunes were poisoning their lives. I saw men who could not have a real friend in the world, because of their money. I saw young girls whose souls were utterly dead in them because they had been brought up to think of themselves as keepers of money-bags, and to guard against men who sought to prey upon them. I hated the thing... I fled from it as I would from a plague. In that world I had met a woman I might have loved... a woman who was noble and beautiful and true; and yet I dared not speak to her... I dared not even permit myself to know her... because I was a poor man, and she was rich. But now she is to be poor also! And so I may speak!

LAURA. [Starting.] Oh!

MONTAGUE. Miss Hegan, from the first time I met you I felt that you were the woman I should love. But then, as fate would have it, I found myself preparing to attack your father; so I said that we must never meet again. But now you see how it has happened. I have come to know you as I never hoped to know you, and I know that I love you.

LAURA. I had no idea...

MONTAGUE. You say that you are going away alone. Let us go

together. We have the same purpose... we have the same battle to fight. We can go out to the people and help to teach them.

LAURA. You... you know that you love me?

MONTAGUE. I love you! I want nothing so much as the chance to serve you and help you. The chance to tell you so is more than I had ever ventured to hope for. To find you free and alone... to be able to speak to you, with no thought of wealth or position! To tell you that I love you... just you! You!

LAURA. I hardly dare to think of it... now... here...

MONTAGUE. We can put all the past behind us... we can take a new start and win our own way. If only you love me!

LAURA. Ah, to let myself be happy again. How can I?

MONTAGUE. If you love me, then we have the key to happiness... then everything is clear before us. We can face the world together! Do you love me? [Stretches out his arms to her.] Laura!

LAURA. [Sways toward him.] I love you.

MONTAGUE. [Embraces her.] My love!

CURTAIN

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