

she lost her complexion and several teeth. Then came a year during which she could not dance at all, and on her return to the stage the final touch which had made her had departed. She got the usual applause, and looked apparently as well as ever, but the judicious grieved.

Two years later she had already begun to sell her sapphires; and a year after that she—saw a ghost!

There is a point in the downward career of vice when it comes face to face with the idleness whose hours initiated it!

### III. CRIME.

La Koslowskaja was 32, and Mark Lessing 47, when they met on the night boat from Calais. He had been over to Paris for the few weeks of happiness among his old friends, she to fulfill a not too-well-paid engagement at the Alhambra.

"My poor Boris!" cried she, as he walked across the gangway. Boris Mikhaelovitch had been her first man, the man she really loved, deep down where love lies, God knows where! but most surely immune from all the accidents of life. Now she saw him, as she thought, old and broken down. She became on the instant eternal youth itself, in that aspect of it which we call motherhood.

The mistake was easily explained, but the conversation continued. Ailsa was lost in memories of first love; Mark in contemplation of the body of a perfect dancer. She gladly agreed to sit for him, his simplicity charmed her; his evident poverty moved her to a great resolution. For Boris' memory she resolved to be a mother-daughter to him. With great difficulty she got him to her flat to dine; with greater persuaded him to sell her a picture for ten pounds. He spent over an hour in persuading her to accept one as a gift.

This price of ten pounds deserves comment. Ailsa was singularly ignorant in patches, and had no idea that anything but dress, jewelry, champagne, and women could cost money. She imagined ten pounds to be a sort of fancy price for a picture. She had vaguely heard of Rembrandts bringing £20,000 in the auction room, but never connected it with any fact of life. She had once been offered a particularly fine Conder for £50, and stamped out of the shop in a rage that anyone should dare to presume so on her inexperience.

The ice once broken, it was the dancer's practice to spend fifteen to twenty pounds a week on Lessing's pictures; and for a year or two he prospered. Greater ease and comfort, combined with complete leisure, overcame advancing age, and he painted harder and better than ever before. Unfortunately his patroness found the contrary. She made less and less, both on the stage and off; her dress cost her more every month, and her hair-dresser and beauty expert ate up all her earnings. There were soon no more supplies; the rent of her flat became a burden. She moved from Mount street to Victoria street, from Victoria street to Russell Square, from Russell Square to Denbigh street. She bored lesser managers than those who had fought in law courts to secure her services; she who had frowned on dukes now smiled at stockbrokers' clerks.

Of all this Mark Lessing was totally unaware. Absorbed completely in his painting, he hardly ever stirred from his studio unless to take the air on the embankment and watch the Titan that is the heart of London's energy tower above the tide. To visit him she always made her finest toilet; she took to feeding in obscure cafés to save the money to buy his pictures. But her visits became less frequent in spite of all that she

could do; and a day came when she could no longer hide her poverty, even from his unobservant eye. He flatly refused to sell her another picture, and only woman's wit won out. She burst into tears, and made a great confession. "All this time," she said, "I have been selling your pictures at a profit. It is all I have to live by."

In plain English, she lied to him. There is a period when the conjunction of vice and idleness gives birth to crime.

### IV. VIRTUE.

Lady Adelaide Victorine Knowsbagge had never lacked anything, but admirers, and her just indignation against those who had any grew, equal-striding, with what cynics vilely called her age and her despair. She envied even the street walker, and devoted her life to dragging such from their already miserable existence to a world of wash tubs and sewing machines, variegated with sermons. She had lent all her wealth and influence to an agitation against a "white slave traffic" which existed only in the columns of pornographic newspapers of the basest type, weeklies whose editors had come from every goal in England to guard the morals of its people. It was principally through her eloquence and intriguing that an act was hurried through Parliament to take away the last happiness of these wretched women by imprisoning and flogging their lovers.

That she did this without self-interest of any kind goes without saying; with her the command of God and the approval of her own conscience were everything. In the career of virtue there are no crises; self-sustained by the consciousness of its own excellence it moves gloriously onwards. Virtue is its own reward.

### V. PUNISHMENT.

It was one of Lady Adelaide's "censors"—the word "spy" is highly improper in this connection—who, failing to obtain money and favor from Ailsa Roberts in return for abstinence from offensive measures, resorted to these, and got her fined £4 for accosting him. This she paid; enraged at his partial failure to revenge alike his pride and cupidity, he resolved upon a subtler plan of persecution, and followed her about for several days. He tracked her to Lessing's studio and made inquiries about the latter, resulting in a visit. When a seedy stranger of villainous appearance offered him a five-pound note for a picture, the painter was not a little taken aback; but being shy and unwilling to wound, accompanied his refusal with the remark that he did not sell his pictures, as he had private means.

"Mark the word, your worship, private means!" was the next act in the comedy, and Lessing found himself in the dock, charged with living on the immoral earnings of Ailsa.

At the trial Mr. Justice Sillimore found the opportunity of his life. Counsel for the Crown had told the whole black story by the hour. Although prisoner's father had been a servant of the English Crown, Lessing was a German name—the name, he understood, of a notorious criminal. A voice in court, "A poet!" and laughter in certain quarters, though the jury became visibly graver.

But the judge out-prosecuted the prosecutor as the sun outshines the moon.

"Prisoner at the bar," said he, when the jury, without leaving the box, returned a verdict of "guilty," "this has been a very plain and a very shocking case. So far from finding any extenuating circumstance, I can see only aggravations of the most disgusting offence—except one—

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