

T. S. ARTHUR

***CAST
ADRIFT***

T. S. Arthur

Cast Adrift

EAN 8596547220848

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

[DETAILED CONTENTS.](#)

[CAST ADRIFT.](#)

[CHAPTER I.](#)

[CHAPTER II.](#)

[CHAPTER III.](#)

[CHAPTER IV.](#)

[CHAPTER V.](#)

[CHAPTER VI.](#)

[CHAPTER VII.](#)

[CHAPTER VIII.](#)

[CHAPTER IX.](#)

[CHAPTER X.](#)

[CHAPTER XI.](#)

[CHAPTER XII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIV.](#)

[CHAPTER XV.](#)

[CHAPTER XVI.](#)

[CHAPTER XVII.](#)

[CHAPTER XVIII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIX.](#)

[CHAPTER XX.](#)

[CHAPTER XXI.](#)

[CHAPTER XXII.](#)

[CHAPTER XXIII.](#)

[CHAPTER XXIV.](#)

CHAPTER XXV.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DETAILED CONTENTS.

[Table of Contents](#)

CHAPTER I. The unwelcome babe—The defrauded young mother—The struggle between life and death—"Your baby is in heaven"—A brief retrospect—A marriage for social position—An ambitious wife and a disappointed husband—The young daughter—The matrimonial market—The Circassian slaves of modern society—The highest bidder—Disappearance—The old sad story—Secret marriage—The letters—Disappointed ambition—Interview between the parents—The mother's purpose—"Baffled, but not defeated"—The father's surprise—The returned daughter—Forgiven—"I am not going away again, father dear"—Insecurity and distrust

CHAPTER II. The hatred of a bad woman—Mrs. Dinneford's plans for the destruction of Granger—Starting in business—Plots of Mrs. Dinneford and Freeling—The discounted notes—The trap—Granger's suspicions aroused—Forgery—Mrs. Dinneford relentless—The arrest—Fresh evidence of crime upon Granger's person—The shock to Edith

—“That night her baby
was born”

CHAPTER III. “It is a splendid boy”—A convenient,
non-interfering
family doctor—Cast adrift—Into the world in a
basket, unnamed
and disowned—Edith's second struggle back to life—
Her mind a
blank—Granger convicted of forgery—Seeks to gain
knowledge of his
child—The doctor's evasion and ignorance—An
insane asylum instead of
State's prison—Edith's slow return to intelligence
—“There's something
I can't understand, mother”—“Where is my
baby?”—“What of George?”—No
longer a child, but a broken hearted woman—The
divorce

CHAPTER IV. Sympathy between father and
daughter—Interest in public
charities—A dreadful sight—A sick babe in the arms
of a half-drunken
woman—“Is there no law to meet such
cases?”—“The poor baby has no
vote!”—Edith seeks for the grave of her child, but
cannot find
it—She questions her mother, who baffles her
curiosity—Mrs. Bray's
visit—Interview between Mrs. Dinneford and Mrs.
Bray—“The baby

isn't living?"—"Yes; I saw it day before yesterday in the arms of a beggar-woman"—Edith's suspicions aroused—Determined to discover the fate of her child—Visits the doctor—"Your baby is in heaven"—"Would to God it were so, for I saw a baby in hell not long ago!"

CHAPTER V. Mrs. Dinneford visits Mrs. Bray—"The woman to whom you gave that baby was here yesterday"—The woman must be put out of the way—Exit Mrs. Dinneford, enter Pinky Swett—"You know your fate—New Orleans and the yellow fever"—"All I want of you is to keep track of the baby"—Division of the spoils—Lucky dreams—Consultation of the dream-book for lucky figures—Sam McFaddon and his backer, who "drives in the Park and wears a two thousand dollar diamond pin"—The fate of a baby begged with—The baby must not die—The lottery-policies

CHAPTER VI. Rottenness at the heart of a great city—Pinky Swett's attempted rescue of a child from cruel beating—The fight—Pinky's arrest—Appearance of the "queen"—Pinky's release at her command—The

queen's home—The screams of children being beaten—The rescue of
“Flanagan's Nell”—Death the great rescuer—“They don't look after
things in here as they do outside—Everybody's got the screws on, and
things must break sometimes, but it isn't called murder—The coroner
understands it all”

CHAPTER VII. Pinky Swett at the mercy of the crowd in the street—Taken

to the nearest station-house—Mrs. Dinneford visits Mrs. Bray

again—Fresh alarms—“She's got you in her power”—“Money is of no

account”—The knock at the door—Mrs. Dinneford in hiding—The visitor

gone—Mrs. Bray reports the woman insatiable in her demands—Must have

two hundred dollars by sundown—No way of escape except through police

interference—“People who deal with the devil generally have the devil

to pay”—Suspicion—A mistake—Sound of feet upon the stairs—Mrs.

Dinneford again in hiding—Enter Pinky Swett—Pinky disposed of—Mrs.

Dinneford again released—Mrs. Bray's strategy—“Let us be friends

still, Mrs. Bray”—Mrs. Dinneford's deprecation and

humiliation—Mrs.

Bray's triumph

CHAPTER VIII. Mrs. Bray receives a package containing two hundred dollars—"Poor baby! I must see better to its comfort"—Pinky meets a young girl from the country—The "Ladies' Restaurant"—Fried oysters and sangaree—The "bindery" girl—"My head feels strangely"—Through the back alley—The ten-cent lodging house—Robbery—A second robbery—A veil drawn—A wild prolonged cry of a woman—The policeman listens only for a moment, and then passes on—Foul play—"In all our large cities are savages more cruel and brutal in their instincts than the Comanches"—Who is responsible?

CHAPTER IX. Valuation of the spoils—The receiver—The "policy-shop" and its customers—A victim of the lottery mania

CHAPTER X. "Policy-drunkards"—A newly-appointed policeman's blunder—The end of a "policy-drunkard"—Pinky and her friend in consultation over "a cast-off baby in Dirty alley"—"If you can't get hush-money out of its mother, you can bleed Fanny Bray"—The way to

starve a baby—Pinky moves her quarters without the use of “a dozen furniture cars”—A baby's home—The baby's night nurse—The baby's supper—The baby's bed—How the baby's money is spent—Where the baby's nurse passes the night—The baby's disappearance

CHAPTER XI. Reserve between mother and daughter—Mrs. Dinneford

disapproves of Edith's charitable visits—Mrs. Dinneford meets Freeling by appointment at a hotel—“There's trouble brewing”—“A letter from George Granger”—Accused of conspiracy—Possibility of Granger's pardon by the governor—An ugly business—In great peril—Freeling's threats of exposure—A hint of an alternative

CHAPTER XII. Mr. Freeling fails to appear at his place of

business—Examination of his bank accounts—It is discovered that he has borrowed largely of his friends—Mrs. Dinneford has supplied him \$20,000

from her private purse—Mrs. Dinneford falls sick, and temporarily

loses her reason—“I told you her name was Gray—Gray, not Bray”—Half

disclosures—Recovery—Mother and daughter mutually suspicious—The

visitor—Mrs. Dinneford equal to the emergency—
Edith thrown off the
track

CHAPTER XIII. Edith is satisfied that her babe is alive
—She has a
desire to teach the children of the poor—“My baby
may become like one
of these”—She hears of a baby which has been
stolen—Resolves to go
and see it, and to apply to Mr. Paulding of the Briar
street mission for
assistance in her attempt—Mr. Paulding persuades
her that it is best
not to see the child, and promises that he himself
will look after
it—Returns home—Her father remonstrates with her,
finally promises to
help her

CHAPTER XIV. Mr. Dinneford sets out for the mission-
house—An incident
on the way—Encounters Mr. Paulding—Mr. Paulding
makes his report—“The
vicious mark their offspring with unmistakable signs
of moral depravity;
this baby has signs of a better origin”—A profitable
conversation—“I
think you had better act promptly”

CHAPTER XV. Mr. Dinneford with a policeman goes in
quest of the
baby—The baby is gone—Inquiries—Mr. Dinneford

resolves to
persevere—Cause of the baby's disappearance—
Pinky Swett's
curiosity—Change of baby's nurse—Baby's improved
condition—Baby's
first experience of motherly tenderness—Baby's first
smile—“Such
beautiful eyes”—Pinky Swett visits the St. John
mission-school—Edith
is not there

CHAPTER XVI. Mr. Dinneford's return, and Edith's
disappointment—“It
is somebody's baby, and it may be mine”—An
unsuspected listener—Mrs.

Dinneford acts promptly—Conference between Mrs.
Dinneford and Mrs.

Hoyt, *alias* Bray—The child must be got out of the
way—“If it will

not starve, it must drown”—Mrs. Dinneford sees an
acquaintance as

she leaves Mrs. Hoyt's, and endeavors to escape his
observation—A new
danger and disgrace awaiting her

CHAPTER XVII. Mental conditions of mother and
daughter—Mr. Dinneford

aroused to a sense of his moral responsibilities—The
heathen in

our midst—The united evil of policy-lotteries and
whisky-shops—The
education of the policy-shops

CHAPTER XVIII. News item: "A child drowned"—
Another news item: Pinky
Swett sentenced to prison for robbery—Baby's
improved
condition—Mrs. Burke's efforts to retain the baby
after Pinky Swett's
imprisonment—Baby Andy's rough life in the street
—Mrs. Burke's
death—Cast upon the world—Andy's adventures—
He finds a home and a
friend

CHAPTER XIX. Mr. Dinneford visits the mission-
school—A comparison of
the present with the past—The first mission-school—
Reminiscences of
the school in its early days—The zealous scholar—
Good effects of
the mission—"Get the burning brands apart, or
interpose incombustible
things between them"—An illustration—"Let in light,
and the darkness
flees"

CHAPTER XX. "The man awoke and felt the child
against his bosom, soft
and warm"—Led by a little child—"God being my
helper, I will be a man
again"—A new life—Meeting of an old friend—A
friend in need—Food,
clothes, work—A new home—God's strength our
only safety

CHAPTER XXI. Intimate relations of physical and moral purity—Blind

Jake—The harvest of the thieves and beggars—Inconsiderate

charity—Beggary a vice—"The deserving poor are never common

beggars"—"To help the evil is to hurt the good" The malignant ulcer

in the body politic of our city—The breeding-places of epidemics and

malignant diseases—Little Italian street musicians—The existence of

slavery in our midst—Facts in regard to it

CHAPTER XXII. Edith's continued interest in the children of the

poor—Christmas dinner at the mission-house—Edith perceives Andy,

and feels a strange attraction toward him—Andy's disappearance after

dinner—Pinky Swett has been seen dragging him away—Lost sight of

CHAPTER XXIII. Christmas dinner at Mr. Dinneford's—The dropped

letter—It is missed—A scene of wild excitement—Mrs. Dinneford's

sudden death—Edith reads the letter—A revelation—"Innocent!"—Edith

is called to her mother—"Dead, and better so!"—Granger's innocence

established—An agony of affection—No longer

Granger's wife

CHAPTER XXIV. Edith's sickness—Meeting of Mrs. Bray and Pinky Swett—A

trial of sharpness, in which neither gains the advantage—Mr. Dinneford

receives a call from a lady—The lady, who is Mrs. Bray, offers

information—Mr. Dinneford surprises her into admitting an important

fact—Mrs. Bray offers to produce the child for a price—Mr. Dinneford

consents to pay the price on certain stipulations—Mrs. Bray departs,

promising to come again

CHAPTER XXV. Granger's pardon procured—How he receives his pardon—Mrs.

Bray tries to trace Pinky home—Loses sight of her in the street—Mrs.

Bray interviews a shop-woman—Pinky's destination—The child is gone

CHAPTER XXVI. Mrs. Bray does not call on Mr. Dinneford, as she

promised—Peril to Andrew Hall through loss of the child—Help—Edith

longs to see or write to Granger, but does not—Edith encounters Mrs.

Bray in the street—"Where is my baby?"—Disappointment—How to identify

the child if found

CHAPTER XXVII. No trace of Andy—Account of

Andy's abduction—Andy's
prison—An outlook from prison—A loose nail—The
escape—The sprained
ankle—The accident
CHAPTER XXVIII. Edith's visit to the children's
hospital—"Oh, my baby!
thank God! my baby!"—The identification
CHAPTER XXIX. Meeting of Mr. Dinneford and George
Granger—"We want you
to help us find your child"—"Edith's heart is calling
out for you"—The
meeting—The marriage benediction

CAST ADRIFF.

[Table of Contents](#)

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

A *BABY* had come, but he was not welcome. Could anything be sadder?

The young mother lay with her white face to the wall, still as death. A woman opened the chamber door noiselessly and came in, the faint rustle of her garments disturbing the quiet air.

A quick, eager turning of the head, a look half anxious, half fearful, and then the almost breathless question,

"Where is my baby?"

"Never mind about the baby," was answered, almost coldly; "he's well enough. I'm more concerned about you."

"Have you sent word to George?"

"George can't see you. I've said that before."

"Oh, mother! I must see my husband."

"Husband!" The tone of bitter contempt with which the word was uttered struck the daughter like a blow. She had partly risen in her excitement, but now fell back with a low moan, shutting her eyes and turning her face away. Even as she did so, a young man stepped back from the door of the elegant house in which she lay with a baffled, disappointed air. He looked pale and wretched.

"Edith!" Two hours afterward the doctor stood over the young mother, and called her name. She did not move nor reply. He laid his hand on her cheek, and almost started, then bent down and looked at her intently for a moment or two. She had fever. A serious expression came into his face, and there was cause.

The sweet rest and heavenly joy of maternity had been denied to his young patient. The new-born babe had not been suffered to lie even for one blissful moment on her bosom. Hard-hearted family pride and cruel worldliness had robbed her of the delight with which God ever seeks to dower young motherhood, and now the overtaxed body and brain had given way.

For many weeks the frail young creature struggled with delirium—struggled and overcame.

“Where is my baby?”

The first thought of returning consciousness was of her baby.

A woman who sat in a distant part of the chamber started up and crossed to the bed. She was past middle life, of medium stature, with small, clearly cut features and cold blue eyes. Her mouth was full, but very firm. Self-poise was visible even in her surprised movements. She bent over the bed and looked into Edith's wistful eyes.

“Where is my baby, mother?” Mrs. Dinneford put her fingers lightly on Edith's lips.

“You must be very quiet,” she said, in a low, even voice. “The doctor forbids all excitement. You have been extremely ill.”

“Can't I see my baby, mother? It won't hurt me to see my baby.”

“Not now. The doctor—”

Edith half arose in bed, a look of doubt and fear coming into her face.

“I want my baby, mother,” she said, interrupting her.

A hard, resolute expression came into the cold blue eyes of Mrs. Dinneford. She put her hand firmly against Edith and pressed her back upon the pillow.

"You have been very ill for nearly two months," she said, softening her voice. "No one thought you could live. Thank God! the crisis is over, but not the danger."

"Two months! Oh, mother!"

The slight flush that had come into Edith's wan face faded out, and the pallor it had hidden for a few moments became deeper. She shut her eyes and lay very still, but it was plain from the expression of her face that thought was busy.

"Not two whole months, mother?" she said, at length, in doubtful tones. "Oh no! it cannot be."

"It is just as I have said, Edith; and now, my dear child, as you value your life, keep quiet; all excitement is dangerous."

But repression was impossible. To Edith's consciousness there was no lapse of time. It seemed scarcely an hour since the birth of her baby and its removal from her sight. The inflowing tide of mother-love, the pressure and yearning sweetness of which she had begun to feel when she first called for the baby they had not permitted to rest, even for an instant, on her bosom, was now flooding her heart. Two months! If that were so, what of the baby? To be submissive was impossible.

Starting up half wildly, a vague terror in her face, she cried, piteously,

"Oh, mother, bring me my baby. I shall die if you do not!"

“Your baby is in heaven,” said Mrs. Dinneford, softening her voice to a tone of tender regret.

Edith caught her breath, grew very white, and then, with a low, wailing cry that sent a shiver through Mrs. Dinneford's heart, fell back, to all appearance dead.

The mother did not call for help, but sat by the bedside of her daughter, and waited for the issue of this new struggle between life and death. There was no visible excitement, but her mouth was closely set and her cold blue eyes fixed in a kind of vacant stare.

Edith was Mrs. Dinneford's only child, and she had loved her with the strong, selfish love of a worldly and ambitious woman. In her own marriage she had not consulted her heart. Mr. Dinneford's social position and wealth were to her far more than his personal endowments. She would have rejected him without a quicker pulse-beat if these had been all he had to offer. He was disappointed, she was not. Strong, self-asserting, yet politic, Mrs Dinneford managed her good husband about as she pleased in all external matters, and left him to the free enjoyment of his personal tastes, preferences and friendships. The house they lived in, the furniture it contained, the style and equipage assumed by the family, were all of her choice, Mr. Dinneford giving merely a half-constrained or half-indifferent consent. He had learned, by painful and sometimes humiliating experience, that any contest with Mrs. Helen Dinneford upon which he might enter was sure to end in his defeat.

He was a man of fine moral and intellectual qualities. His wealth gave him leisure, and his tastes, feelings and habits of thought drew him into the society of some of the best

men in the city where he lived—best in the true meaning of that word. In all enlightened social reform movements you would be sure of finding Mr. Howard Dinneford. He was an active and efficient member in many boards of public charity, and highly esteemed in them all for his enlightened philanthropy and sound judgment. Everywhere but at home he was strong and influential; there he was weak, submissive and of little account. He had long ago accepted the situation, making a virtue of necessity. A different man—one of stronger will and a more imperious spirit—would have held his own, even though it wrought bitterness and sorrow. But Mr. Dinneford's aversion to strife, and gentleness toward every one, held him away from conflict, and so his home was at least tranquil.

Mrs. Dinneford had her own way, and so long as her husband made no strong opposition to that way all was peaceful.

For Edith, their only child, who was more like her father than her mother, Mr. Dinneford had the tenderest regard. The well-springs of love, choked up so soon after his marriage, were opened freely toward his daughter, and he lived in her a new, sweet and satisfying life. The mother was often jealous of her husband's demonstrative tenderness for Edith. A yearning instinct of womanhood, long repressed by worldliness and a mean social ambition, made her crave at times the love she had cast away, and then her cup of life was very bitter. But fear of Mr. Dinneford's influence over Edith was stronger than any jealousy of his love. She had high views for her daughter. In her own marriage she had set aside all considerations but those of social rank. She had

made it a stepping-stone to a higher place in society than the one to which she was born. Still, above them stood many millionaire families, living in palace-homes, and through her daughter she meant to rise into one of them. It mattered not for the personal quality of the scion of the house; he might be as coarse and common as his father before him, or weak, mean, selfish, and debased by sensual indulgence. This was of little account. To lift Edith to the higher social level was the all in all of Mrs. Dinneford's ambition.

But Mr. Dinneford taught Edith a nobler life-lesson than this, gave her better views of wedlock, pictured for her loving heart the bliss of a true marriage, sighing often as he did so, but unconsciously, at the lost fruition of his own sweet hopes. He was careful to do this only when alone with Edith, guarding his speech when Mrs. Dinneford was present. He had faith in true principles, and with these he sought to guard her life. He knew that she would be pushed forward into society, and knew but too well that one so pure and lovely in mind as well as person would become a centre of attraction, and that he, standing on the outside as it were, would have no power to save her from the saddest of all fates if she were passive and her mother resolute. Her safety must lie in herself.

Edith was brought out early. Mrs. Dinneford could not wait. At seventeen she was thrust into society, set up for sale to the highest bidder, her condition nearer that of a Circassian than a Christian maiden, with her mother as slave-dealer.

So it was and so, it is. You may see the thing every day. But it did not come out according to Mrs. Dinneford's programme. There was a highest bidder; but when he came for his slave, she was not to be found.

Well, the story is trite and brief—the old sad story. Among her suitors was a young man named Granger, and to him Edith gave her heart. But the mother rejected him with anger and scorn. He was not rich, though belonging to a family of high character, and so fell far below her requirements. Under a pressure that almost drove the girl to despair, she gave her consent to a marriage that looked more terrible than death. A month before the time fixed for, its consummation, she barred the contract by a secret union with Granger.

Edith knew her mother's character too well to hope for any reconciliation, so far as Mr. Granger was concerned. Coming in as he had done between her and the consummation of her highest ambition, she could never feel toward him anything but the most bitter hatred; and so, after remaining at home for about a week after her secret marriage, she wrote this brief letter to her mother and went away:

“My DEAR MOTHER: I do not love Spencer Wray, and would rather die than marry him, and so I have made the marriage to which my heart has never consented, an impossibility. You have left me no other alternative but this. I am the wife of George Granger, and go to cast my lot with his.

“Your loving daughter,

“EDITH.”

To her father she wrote:

“My DEAR, DEAR FATHER: If I bring sorrow to your good and loving heart by what I have done, I know that it will be tempered with joy at my escape from a union with one from whom my soul has ever turned with irrepressible dislike. Oh, my father, you can understand, if mother cannot, into what a desperate strait I have been brought. I am a deer hunted to the edge of a dizzy chasm, and I leap for life over the dark abyss, praying for strength to reach the farther edge. If I fail in the wild effort, I can only meet destruction; and I would rather be bruised to death on the jagged rocks than trust myself to the hounds and hunters. I write passionately—you will hardly recognize your quiet child; but the repressed instincts of my nature are strong, and peril and despair have broken their bonds. I did not consult you about the step I have taken, because I dared not trust you with my secret. You would have tried to hold me back from the perilous leap, fondly hoping for some other way of escape. I had resolved on putting an impassable gulf between me and danger, if I died in the attempt. I have taken the leap, and may God care for me!

“I have laid up in my heart of hearts, dearest of fathers, the precious life-truths that so often fell from your lips. Not a word that you ever said about the sacredness of marriage has been forgotten. I believe with you that it is a little less than crime to marry when no love exists—that she who does so, sells her heart's birthright for some mess of pottage, sinks down from the pure level of noble womanhood, and traffics away her person, is henceforth meaner in quality if not really vile.

“And so, my father, to save myself from such a depth of degradation and misery, I take my destiny into my own hands. I have grown very strong in my convictions and purposes in the last four weeks. My sight has become suddenly clear. I am older by many years.

“As for George Granger, all I can now say is that I love him, and believe him to be worthy of my love. I am willing to trust him, and am ready to share his lot, however humble.

“Still hold me in your heart, my precious father, as I hold you in mine.

“EDITH.”

Mr. Dinneford read this letter twice. It took him some time, his eyes were so full of tears. In view of her approaching marriage with Spencer Wray, his heart had felt very heavy. It was something lighter now. Young Granger was not the man he would have chosen for Edith, but he liked him far better than he did the other, and felt that his child was safe now.

He went to his wife's room, and found her with Edith's letter crushed in her hand. She was sitting motionless, her face pale and rigid, her eyes fixed and stony and her lips tight against her teeth. She did not seem to notice his presence until he put his hand upon her, which he did without speaking. At this she started up and looked at him with a kind of fierce intentness.

“Are you a party to this frightful things?” she demanded.

Mr. Dinneford weakly handed her the letter he had received from Edith. She read it through in half the time it had taken his tear-dimmed eyes to make out the touching sentences. After she had done so, she stood for a few

moments as if surprised or baffled. Then she sat down, dropping her head, and remained for a long time without speaking.

"The bitter fruit, Mr. Dinneford," she said, at last, in a voice so strange and hard that it seemed to his ears as if another had spoken. All passion had died out of it.

He waited, but she added nothing more. After a long silence she waved her hand slightly, and without looking at her husband, said,

"I would rather be alone."

Mr. Dinneford took Edith's letter from the floor, where it had dropped from his wife's hand, and withdrew from her presence. She arose quickly as he did so, crossed the room and silently turned the key, locking herself in. Then her manner changed; she moved about the room in a half-aimless, half-conscious way, as though some purpose was beginning to take shape in her mind. Her motions had an easy, cat-like grace, in contrast with their immobility a little while before. Gradually her step became quicker, while ripples of feeling began to pass over her face, which was fast losing its pallor. Gleams of light began shooting from her eyes, that were so dull and stony when her husband found her with Edith's letter crushed in her grasp. Her hands opened and shut upon themselves nervously. This went on, the excitement of her forming purpose, whatever it was, steadily increasing, until she swept about the room like a fury, talking to herself and gesticulating as one half insane from the impelling force of an evil passion.

"Baffled, but not defeated." The excitement had died out. She spoke these words aloud, and with a bitter satisfaction

in her voice, then sat down, resting her face in her hands, and remaining for a long time in deep thought.

When she met her husband, an hour afterward, there was a veil over her face, and he tried in vain to look beneath it. She was greatly changed; her countenance had a new expression—something he had never seen there before. For years she had been growing away from him; now she seemed like one removed to a great distance—to have become almost stranger. He felt half afraid of her. She did not speak of Edith, but remained cold, silent and absorbed.

Mrs. Dinneford gave no sign of what was in her heart for many weeks. The feeling of distance and strangeness perceived by her husband went on increasing, until a vague feeling of mystery and fear began to oppress him. Several times he had spoken of Edith, but his wife made no response, nor could he read in her veiled face the secret purposes she was hiding from him.

No wonder that Mr. Dinneford was greatly surprised and overjoyed, on coming home one day, to meet his daughter, to feel her arms about his neck, and to hold her tearful face on his bosom.

“And I'm not going away again, father dear,” she said as she kissed him fondly. “Mother has sent for me, and George is to come. Oh, we shall be so happy, so happy!”

And father and daughter cried together, like two happy children, in very excess of gladness. They had met alone, but Mrs. Dinneford came in, her presence falling on them like a cold shadow.

“Two great babies,” she said, a covert sneer in her chilling voice.

The joy went slowly out of their faces, though not out of their hearts. There it nestled, and warmed the renewing blood. But a vague, questioning fear began to creep in, a sense of insecurity, a dread of hidden danger. The daughter did not fully trust her mother, nor the husband his wife.

CHAPTER II.

[Table of Contents](#)

THE reception of young Granger was as cordial as Mrs. Dinneford chose to make it. She wanted to get near enough to study his character thoroughly, to discover its weaknesses and defects, not its better qualities, so that she might do for him the evil work that was in her heart. She hated him with a bitter hatred, and there is nothing so subtle and tireless and unrelenting as the hatred of a bad woman.

She found him weak and unwary. His kindly nature, his high sense of honor, his upright purpose, his loving devotion to Edith, were nothing in her eyes. She spurned them in her thoughts, she trampled them under her feet with scorn. But she studied his defects, and soon knew every weak point in his character. She drew him out to speak of himself, of his aims and prospects, of his friends and associates, until she understood him altogether. Then she laid her plans for his destruction.

Granger was holding a clerkship at the time of his marriage, but was anxious to get a start for himself. He had some acquaintance with a man named Lloyd Freeling, and often spoke of him in connection with business. Freeling had a store on one of the best streets, and, as represented by himself, a fine run of trade, but wanted more capital. One day he said to Granger,

“If I could find the right man with ten thousand dollars, I would take him in. We could double this business in a year.”

Granger repeated the remark at home, Mrs. Dinneford listened, laid it up in her thought, and on the next day called at the store of Mr. Freeling to see what manner of man he was.

Her first impression was favorable—she liked him. On a second visit she likes him better. She was not aware that Freeling knew her; in this he had something of the advantage. A third time she dropped in, asking to see certain goods and buying a small bill, as before. This time she drew Mr. Freeling into conversation about business, and put some questions the meaning of which he understood quite as well as she did.

A woman like Mrs. Dinneford can read character almost as easily as she can read a printed page, particularly a weak or bad character. She knew perfectly, before the close of this brief interview, that Freeling was a man without principle, false and unscrupulous, and that if Granger were associated with him in business, he could, if he chose, not only involve him in transactions of a dishonest nature, but throw upon him the odium and the consequences.

“Do you think,” she said to Granger, not long afterward, “that your friend, Mr. Freeling, would like to have you for a partner in business?”

The question surprised and excited him.

“I know it,” he returned; “he has said so more than once.”

“How much capital would he require?”

“Ten thousand dollars.”

“A large sum to risk.”