WHO'S GUILTY?

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

TOM PRICE, a young architect.

LAURA PRICE, his wife.

PROFESSOR SARGENT, Laura's singing teacher.

PAUL LEGRAND, famous song writer and composer, friend of Sargent's.

NINTH STORY

When Tom Price asked Luara Belden to marry him, he set forth to her the following account of his fortune:

"In two things," he said, "I am a millionaire—in love and hope. As far as actual cash goes, I've nearly seven hundred dollars. As for prospects—a fairly efficient young architect ought to be able to pick up a living, even in a small up-State town like this. All I ask is a chance. And, some day or other, that chance is bound to come."

Perhaps a more mercenary girl than Laura would have hesitated a long time before linking her life to a man of such meager prosnects. But Laura Belden was anything but mercenary.

To her Tom Price was the handsomest, the cleverest, the most wonderful man in all the world. She never for one moment doubted his future success as an architect or at any other pursuit to which he might care to turn his genius.

So they were married.

They set up light housekeeping in a tiny house that Laura made very pretty and homelike. And Tom spent eight hours a day in his cheap little office with its glaringly new sign) waiting for the big orders that were to make him rich and famous.

The orders, it is true, seemed in no hurry to arrive. But Tom waited, hopefully. As for Laura, she outdid Tom himself in the art of hoping. It would not have surprised her at all to learn, any day, that her wonderful husband had secured a contract to design a cathedral; or at the very least a pork king's summer palace.

Meantime, she went on with the study of music; which she had taken up long before her marriage. She had a really unusual lyric soprano voice. And Prof. Sargent, her teacher, prophesied a great career for her.

Tom was tremendously proud of his pretty little wife's singing. He never tired of listening to it; even when she spent half an hour at a time practicing uninteresting scales and detached bits of difficult phrasing.

But when Sargent spoke of a career for her, the bridegroom would scowl and say tersely:

"I can support my wife, thanks, without sending her out to be ogled by an audience of strangers."

At last came Tom's longed-for "chance." A small office building was going up at the corner of Temple and Maple streets. And, among fifteen architests' bids for the job, Tom Price's was chosen.

He was radiant with delight. He resolved that that cheap five-story edifice should serve as a model of beauty and efficiency for the whole city.

Day and night he labored over the task.

As the building's unsightly framework arose, foot by foot, he and Laura used to gaze upon it in silent rapture! as at a fairy castle.

One morning as the Prices sat at the breakfast table, Laura said, rather wistfully:

"You aren't the only member of this family who has a 'chance,' Tom. Only, you can take advantage of yours. And I have to reject mine."

"What do you mean?" asked Tom, looking up, curiously, from some notes he was scribbing on the back of an envelope.

"Yesterday, when I went to Prof. Sargent for my lesson," said Laura, "he made me a splendid offer. He wants me to go on a concert tour."

"Concert tour?" echoed Tom, frowning. "Nonsense!"

"I was afraid you'd say so," she sighed. "I told him you wouldnt allow me to. He was ever so disappointed. He said it was one opportunity in a thousand. You know Paul Legrand, the composer?"

"No," snapped Tom, "and I don't want to. He has the name for making love to every woman under fifty and over fifteen. I've no use for lady-killers."

"I mean," she corrected, "you know his work. You like his songs, too. Professor Sargent has given me dozens of them to learn. He says they fit my voice better than any others and that I sing them better than any other soprano."

"You sing everything better than anyone else can, little girl," put in Tom. "And——"

"And yesterday," continued Laura, "Mr. Legrand happened to be at the Sargent studio when I was taking my lesson. Professor Sargent made me sing several of his songs. And Mr. Legrand went wild over the way I sang them."

"The puppy!" grunted Tom, "Of course, he'd——"

"Then he called Professor Sargent aside," went on Laura, "and they whispered together for a long time. Then Professor Sargent came back to me and said that Mr. Legrand is planning to finance a concert tour to push the sale of his own songs and that he has been looking everywhere for the right soprano to sing them. As soon as he heard me, he decided no one can do justice to the songs as I can. And he wants me to make the tour. He's to play the accompaniaments himself. The tour starts in two months. Oh, Tom," she finished, in childlike appeal, "can't I go? I want to, so much!"

Tom Price came around to his wife's side by the table. She had risen. He put his arms tenderly around her, as he made answer:

"Sweetheart, I feel like a brute, to refuse you anything in the world. And if it were really for your happiness, I wouldn't stand in your way for one moment. But it isn't dear. The truly happy woman is the woman with a home and a husband of her own. Not the woman who must knock around the country on stuffy trains and sleep in cheap hotels, picking up a living as a singer or an actress. Can't you understand that? It would spoil our sweet home-life. It would separate us, for weeks at a time. It isn't as though I couldn't support you comfortably. Now that my chance has come, we'll be well off—for people of our age. And I want you at home with me."

"Just as you say, Tom," she agreed, meekly.

"Besides," he added, in reluctant confession, "I'm ashamed to say I'm jealous. Horribly jealous. I won't have you touring the country with a Don Juan like Legrand, singing for a lot of leering men, and associating with managers and press agents and critics who would be forever trying to make love to you. I won't share your beauty and your voice with the public. Let it go at that, little sweetheart of mine. Try to forget your silly dream of becoming a second Sembrich. I'll make it up to you, somehow."

He kissed her good-by and hurried off for his morning inspection of the new building.

Laura looked from the window, watching until he was out of sight. Then she turned back to her household duties. She felt no rancor, no fretfulness, no rebellion, at the decision which put an end to her career. Tom had said it. Therefore, it must be right. For Tom was always right.

Yet she carried a heavy heart all morning, as she realized the hope she must throw away.

She carried a far heavier heart, during the weeks that followed. For, at noon, Tom Price was brought home to her on a stretcher—senseless, inert, terribly injured. The ambulance surgeon, who escorted the stricken man, told Laura the story of the accident.

Tom had been standing on an upper-floor framework, watching the unloading of an elevator full of brick and mortar when the elevator rope broke.

A workman who was still in the elevator had leaped for the scaffolding, to save himself from a fall. Tom had sprung forward to catch him. The workman's convulsively outflung hands had dragged Tom from his precarious balance at the edge of the elevator shaft. Together, the two men had fallen to the ground floor.

Both had been picked up unconscious. Tom had recovered his senses long enough to whisper a demand that he be taken home instead of to the hospital.

The surgeon reported that Price's right leg had doubled under him in the fall, sustaining a compound fracture in two places. Also that he was a mass of contusions and abrasions and might perhaps be injured internally, as well.

Laura installed herself as assistant to the two trained nurses the family doctor brought. Specialists were called in to determine the extent of the internal hurts. And the dreary routine of sick-room life began.

The once-cheery little home became a hospital. For a fortnight Tom seemed to vacillate between life and death. Then his other injuries yielded to medical care, leaving only the doubly broken right leg to care for.

Laura, for the first time, suffered herself to draw a long breath of relief, now that the danger was passed. But a new worry came, to replace the old. No person of moderate means, who has known a long siege of illness, will need to be told that this new worry took on a financial form.

Doctors, surgeons, specialists, nurses, medicines, delicacies—all these items eat into the bank account with an appetite that is insatiable. And Laura speedily discovered this fact.

Life must go on, in illness as in health. Only, in the former, fifty times as expensively.

The little nest egg in the savings bank melted as if it had been a snowball on a hot stove. When the specialists' bills were paid, when the other medical accounts and the nurses' wages were settled, there remained perilously little wherewith to meet the claims of the tradesmen, to say nothing of the druggist.

Two months had passed since the accident. Tom, fully dressed at last (but with his bandaged leg stuck straight before him on a bench and his crutches at his side), sat in the little living room of the flat. It was his frist day outside his own room. And he glanced about him in perplexity.

"This room seems, somehow, changed, since I was out here before," he said to Laura. "It's different and—and barer."

She hesitated an instant, then said, very quietly:

"It's the absence of my piano that makes the room look queer."

"Your piano?" he repeated, "That's so. Where is it?"

"'Sold it? Are you joking?"

"It isn't much of a joke," she replied, "at least, not to me."

"But why did you do such a thing?" he demanded. "Why did you sell it? You were so fond of it. And you needed it so, in your practicing."

"There won't be any more practicing, just now," she told him, "I have stopped my Music lessons."

"But I don't understand," he stammered. "They meant so much to you. They and your piano."

"Dear," she said, softly, "they meant nothing to me—nothing at all—compared to your precious self. Our money ran out. You had to have the right food, the right medicines, the right nursing. There was only one thing left to do. So I gave up my expensive music lessons. And I sold my expensive piano. When the piano money is gone I will try to figure out some new way to meet expenses until you are strong enough to work again."

A mist of tears arose in the eyes of the illness-weakened man.

"You sacrificed your beloved piano for me!" he muttered, brokenly. "Oh, darling, how can I ever make up to you for that?"

"By not thinking about it any longer," was her cheery reply, "and by getting well again as soon as you can. The doctor says you will be able to walk in another month or so. Isn't that splendid?"

"And," he said with bitter sadness, "in the meantime I lie here like a dog and let a woman support me! It would have been better if I had died. Then you'd have had my insurance to live on, and——"

She pressed one of her little hands reprovingly across his mouth.

"Hush!" she rebuked, "you musn't speak so. It's a joy to be able to do anything for you, Tom. I love to. It's no sacrifice at all. And in a month or two——"

"In a month of two," he supplemented, "I shall have to go limping around in search of work. For, Dr. Sprague tells me, the Stuytoff Construction Company went, last week, into the hands of a receiver, and the Lord alone knows when I'll get any money on what they owe me for designing that miserable building for them. I hadn't meant to let you know this until I could give you some better news along with it. But there doesn't seem very much chance of 'better news.' We may as well face the truth. We're dead broke, you and I. And we've no prospects of being any better off for a long time to come. Meanwhile, when the money you get for the piano is gone, what are we going to do? It looks pretty black, dear girl."

"We have each other," she comforted him. "And——"

A ring at the doorbell interrupted her. She answered the summons, admitting two men.

Tom recognized the older of the two visitors as Professor Sargent, his wife's singing teacher. The younger was a strikingly handsome man, scarcely thirty years old; and with a graceful, self-assured manner which jarred on Price.

Laura welcomed the newcomers cordially. Professor Sargent was warmly sympathetic in his greeting of the invalid. Laura introduced the stranger to Tom as "Mr. Paul Legrand." Her husband found difficulty in making himself barely civil to the composer. He hated Legrand at sight. He did not know why. It was one of those sudden antipathies so hard to explain and so much harder to overcome.

Professor Sargent came at once to the object of the visit.

"Mrs. Price," he began, "this is probably no sort of time to come here talking business. But Legrand badgered me until I consented to. His tour starts in a week. He still declares that no soprano but yourself can do justice to those songs of his. And he seems to think I have enough influence over you to make you change your mind. He also authorizes me to add twenty-five per cent to the terms he offered you, before, and to promise you, as a bonus, a percentage on the receipts."

"I'm afraid it's no use, professor," said Laura, her sweet voice vibrant with a regret that did not escape Tom. "My husband does not——"

"Mr. Price!" broke in Legrand, impulsively, "perhaps you don't realize what this means to your wife. As a mere business man, you may not know that I am just now one of the most popular music composers in America. The concert tour is to exploit my songs; sung as I intended them to be sung. I, myself, shall be at the piano. That, by itself, insures the success of the tour. I am offering your wife an opportunity for which many lyric sopranos of established reputation would be humbly grateful. I am conferring a high honor on your wife by asking——"

"The highest honor a man can confer on another man's wife," interposed Tom, "is to let her alone. At least, that is the way I regard such things. I may be hopelessly old-fashioned. But——"

"You are," Legrand assured him, quite untouched by the snub, "and, let me tell you, if she sings in these concerts of mine and if she scores a success in them, her fortune is made. She will be besieged by offers from managers. She——"

"That is true, Mr. Price," said Professor Sargent, "it is stated rather less modestly than you may care to hear it. But it is entirely true. Mrs. Price will not only receive far higher terms for the tour than ever I have known an untried singer to get, but she will also have a chance to make a name for herself. A name that she can coin into money. With a voice like hers——"

"She has already made a name for herself, sir," retorted Tom, "she made it at the altar. The name of 'Price.' Not an exalted name, perhaps. But I believe and hope she is quite content with it. She needs no other."

"You understand me," answered Sargent, "I meant to say——"

But Legrand cut him short, by interrupting:

"Look here, Mr. Price, let's speak plainly. I've made inquiries about you. I learn that you're flat broke, that you've got nothing laid by—in short that you're up against it, and with no hope of going out to make a living for some months to come. I——"

"That is my affair!" snapped Tom.

"It isn't," contradicted Legrand, "it's your wife's. It's she who suffers by it, a long shot worse than you. All this smug old-fashioned talk about a wife's place being in the home may be correct enough, as long as her husband has a fairly comfortable home to give her. But you can't give her anything. Sargent says she has even had to sell her piano to keep you from starving. If you were a musician you'd understand what that means to her. It's like giving up her right hand. You can't give her anything. She'll starve to death with you. Yet you refuse her a chance to make a living and a reputation."

"You are mistaken," said Tom, coldly. "I am giving her a chance to keep her reputation. As for my not being able to provide for her, that is no concern of yours."

"Tom!" protested Laura, troubled at her husband's rudeness to their guest.

Price's eye met hers. He saw, in her face, the sharp disappointment involved by his refusal. He recalled all she had done for him—all she had suffered and sacrificed on his account—all that this "chance" meant to her.

"How long is the tour?" he asked, hesitatingly.

"Ten weeks,' replied Legrand, with sudden eagerness. "We open next Monday night in Galveston. We close in New York just ten weeks later."

"Tom!" cried Laura, joyous incredulity bringing a flush to her cheeks and a new light to her eyes as she read Price's expression. "Tom! Do you mean you are really going to let me go?"

Tom nodded, in silent wretchedness.

"Good for you, old man!" applauded Sargent.

"I congratulate you on coming at last to your senses, Mr. Price," added the delighted Legrand. "You will never be sorry for this. I thank you with all my heart."

"I don't want your thanks," growled Tom, ungraciously. "I'm doing this on her account. Not on yours. I owe it to her. And I pay my debts."

Three days later Laura Price set forth from home to join the Legrand Concert company at Galveston.

Tom could hobble painfully around the flat by this time. The funds from the piano's sale would provide for him, for the present, and for the wages of an elderly woman who had been hired to keep house for him in his wife's absence.

Before the ready money should be gone the family exchequer would be reenforced by such sums as Laura could forward to him from her salary.

Laura was jubilant. Her life-dream had at last come true. The voice Tom loved—the voice her friends and teacher praised—was to be heard by the music world at large. She would be able to take her place among the recognized singers of the day.

If she should make good—and there was no doubt of this, in her heart—her foot would be firmly placed upon the ladder of fame; the ladder on whose loftier rungs stood Melba and Tetrazzini and the rest of the immortals. Her future was assured. There would be gold and glory—gold to dispel Tom's money troubles and make him comfortable for life—glory to reflect upon him, as her husband, and to make him happily proud of his renowned wife.

It was a dream of perfect happiness, and it transported her into a veritable fools' paradise that exalted and thrilled her. Whenever a pang of premature homesickness assailed her, or she shrank from the prospect of absence from her adored husband, she would quiet these unbidden qualms by saying to herself:

"It's for Tom! It's all for him! It will be his success as well as mine."

As for Tom, once having made up his mind, he said not a word to indicate the heartbreak that was his. In letting Laura accept the Legrand offer, he had made his life's supreme sacrifice of self-effacement. He had yielded his own happiness for hers.

For, he knew he and she would never again be as once they had been. He knew, too, that during every hour of her absence he would be tortured by a gnawing jealousy that would rend his soul as the fangs of rabid beasts might rend a victim's body.

Already he hated Legrand. He hated the composer's easy aggressiveness; his self-assurance, his assumption of the airs of a conqueror. Tom began to remember, anew, scraps of gossip he had heard concerning the man's success with women.

And it was to the companionship of this handsome rival—aided ever by the subtle bond of music—that Tom Price was going to surrender his dear wife for ten endless weeks! The thought drove him well-nigh frantic.

Tom was jealous, too, in lesser degree, of the other members of the troup and of the public at large, who were to gaze on Laura's loveliness and who perhaps would regard her as a mere stage performer whose morals were light and whose husband was a silly figurehead.

The agony of Price's long illness had been as nothing to the anguish of mind that was now his. Yet, by sheer self-control, he kept his torture to himself; showing no hint of it to Laura, lest he mar her almost infantile rapture over the prospect of the tour.

Not until the minute of her departure did he say anything that could hint at the terror and pain of soul that were consuming him. It was as he was bidding her good-by and god-speed that he spoke.

"Little sweetheart," he faltered, holding her very close to him. "Promise me something. Something that means more to me than I could make you understand, even if I wanted to. Promise me."

"Why, darling," she answered in surprise at his ill-repressed vehemence, "I'll promise you anything in the world. You know that. What is it?"

"Promise you'll be true to me while you're away—and forever and ever."

She drew back from him, and looked up into his pain-haggard face with a flush of indignation.

"Why, Tom!" she exclaimed, "do you know you are insulting me? It is an insult for any man to doubt his wife's loyalty."

"Forgive me!" he begged, "but you know how foolishly jealous I am, and how I shall be worrying. Make my mind easier by promising."

She saw the piteous appeal in his eyes, and her heart softened. As though speaking to a frightened child, she made answer:

"I promise, Tom, I promise, faithfully. But—it's absurd of you to think for a moment that I need such a promise to keep me true to you."

"I know," he said, humbly. "I know, dear. But—you have made me very happy, just the same, by giving me your promise. For I know you never break your word. I'll feel easier now."

"You're a silly, silly boy!" she chided, "but, somehow, I love you all the more for it. And——" she broke off, "when I get back, you'll be all well and strong again. Isn't that a wonderful thing to look forward to?"

"The most wonderful thing to look forward to," he said, kissing her, "is—you!"

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From the outset the concert tour scored a genuine success. And the success piled up as the tour continued and as its fame preceded it from city to city.

The bulk of the honors went to the hitherto unknown young lyric soprano, Laura Price. Her beauty and her personal charm, almost as much as her marvelous voice, carried her straight onward to complete and unmistakable triumph.

Before the tour was half ended, she was overwhelmed by offers from managers and agents. Her name and fame and fortune were made.

Owing to her personal success the tour's receipts swelled beyond Legrand's most airy hopes. Laura's percentage of the profits assumed a size that dwarfed the memory of all the money she and Tom had ever possessed. Her month's salary alone, apart from percentages, was more than poor Tom Price had earned in a year.

Throughout she did not let victory go to her brain or make her other than the charmingly girlish and simple woman she had always been. Her daily home letters to Tom were full of innocently vain accounts of her triumphs, but they were also full of the almost maternal love she bore the invalid, and of her longing to be with him once more.

One cloud alone—apart from absence from Tom—marred the sunshine of the trip. From the outset Legrand had assumed toward her an air of half-protective tenderness, that was so subtle as to render it difficult to prevent and still more difficult to resent.

He was always at Laura's side, under some pretext or other, always guarding her welfare and looking out for her comfort, beyond that of the other members of the troup.

Legrand's manner toward her was wholly deferential, but it was proprietory, too. Laura felt that the other singers and the manager must certainly draw erroneous conclusions from it. Yet she could do or say nothing to deter her admirer.

Legrand was a shrewd student of womankind, and a pastmaster in the art of love-making. He was far too clever to wreck his supposed chances with Laura by openly declaring his feelings toward her so early in the action. Moreover, as she was the backbone of his tour's success, he dared not risk offending her.

So instead of the "whirlwind campaign" which he preferred, he adroitly advanced, inch by inch, so imperceptibly as to make it impossible for her to check him.

He said nothing—he did nothing—that could give her cause for anger or for reproof. Yet always he wove about her a subtle web of attentions that was daily becoming stronger and less easy to escape from.

Vaguely she felt this. But she could do nothing until some overt word or deed should bring the man within reach of her scorn.

As for writing a word of all this to Tom she was far too sensible to do such a fatal thing. She knew his jealousy and that a mere hint was enough to fan it into murderous flame. So sorely puzzled as to what she ought to do, she kept her own counsel—and waited.

"It's that chuckle-headed husband of hers who keeps us apart," Legrand once told his chum, the manager. "If I could get him to give her up she'd marry me in a minute. I know she would. I don't believe she loves him. She can't. And even though she doesn't show it, I can tell she has learned to care for me. But she's a good woman. And she feels bound to stay true to him. If he could be made to drop her or divorce her she'd marry me as fast as we could get a minister to perform the ceremony."

The tour was nearing an end. On the morning after the first concert in Boston, Legrand sent for Laura and the contralto to come to his suite of rooms in the hotel at which the company was staying. He wished, he said, to go over new songs with each of them.

"Did you see the papers?" he asked them as they came into his sitting-room. "They've given us the best notices we've had yet. At this rate we'll carry New York by storm. As usual, Mrs. Price, the critics are crazy over your singing. And by the way, would you care to glance over these press notices for the New York engagement while Mrs. McDonald and I run over this encore song of hers?"

In remarkably short time the contralto had sung the encore song to the composer-accompanist's satisfaction. Pleading a shopping appointment she went out, leaving Legrand and Laura together.

Of late Laura had begun to notice people seemed to have a habit of going out and leaving them alone together. She perplexedly wondered why.

As soon as the contralto had gone Legrand arranged a sheet of manuscript music on the piano.

"It's a florid, melodramatic thing," he told her. "I call it the 'Dagger Song.' I picked up a queer old dirk at a curio shop the other day. And it suddenly occurred to me that, though there are dozens of 'Sword Songs,' no one ever wrote a 'Dagger Song.' So I wrote this. Here," picking up an antique knife from the table, "is the dagger that inspired it."

He handed her the weapon. She looked shudderingly at its rusty blade.

"I like to think those dark stains on the hilt are of blood" he said.

"Ugh!" she shivered, dropping the dagger on the piano top and rubbing her fingers with her handkerchief. "And to think I touched it! Let's get at the song. If it is as gruesome as the dagger itself I warn you I shan't sing it."

She tossed the handkerchief down on the piano, and bent over to read the music, as Legrand began to play the prelude. Her breath was warm on his cheek. And it thrilled him to the soul.

He needed all his will-power to go on playing as though she were not so close beside him. Yet he dared not speak the ardent words that sprang to his lips.

After a time she departed to her own rooms, taking the song with her. She had not been gone two minutes when the outer door of Legrand's sitting room was flung violently open.

Tom Price stood on the threshold.

"Where is my wife?" he demanded, without other form of greeting: his angry eyes searching the sitting room. "At the office desk they said she wasn't in her rooms. I met your manager in the lobby. He told me I would probably find her in your suite."

"She just stepped out," answered Legrand, a sudden idea flashing into his mind. "But if you care to wait, she'll be back again in a few minutes."

"You seem pretty sure of it," said Tom, pugnaciously.

"Why shouldn't I be?" was the careless rejoinder, "I ought to be by this time."

A false note in the elaborate carelessness caught Tom's attention, though he only in part translated it.

"I don't believe you," he declared, "I don't believe my wife comes to your suite at all. I believe you're lying. I——"

"When I talk to a drunkard or a crazy man," scoffed Legrand, "I don't resent things he says, but, if you want my proof," his insolent gaze roved over the room, "that's a handkerchief of hers lying on the piano yonder."

Tom swooped down upon the handkerchief, shaking it out and holding it to the light. In one corner it bore Laura's familiar monogram. The husband let it flutter to the floor. His head sank on his breast. All at once the youth and hope and energy seemed to be stricken from him.

"What are you doing here anyway?" asked Legrand, well pleased with the impression he had created. "She told me you were still too lame to walk."

"The doctor told me my leg was sound again three days ago," said Tom, "I didn't write her about it. I ran on here instead to surprise her. She——"

"It'll surprise her," assented Legrand with a sneering grin, "though maybe not quite in the way you were fool enough to hope. She counted on your being tied by the leg in your own little rube town for another two weeks at the very least. She said she was counting on that much more vacation anyhow."

"She did not say that," said Tom lifting his head and staring dazedly at his tormentor. "You lie."

"I told you I pay no attention to lunatics' ravings," returned Legrand. "But now you're here there is something I do want to say to you, if you have sense enough to understand me."

"I want to hear nothing from you. I——"

"But you'll have to hear it just the same," resumed Legrand. "It concerns your wife. I love her. She loves me. We want to marry. You stand in our way. In the way of her happiness. Have you manhood enough to set her free so she can be happy?"

Tom gazed dully at him, scarce comprehending. Legrand, raising his voice a little, as though addressing a deaf man, continued impatiently:

"Will you set her free? Or are you cur enough to go on for life, living on her earnings? We are willing to pension you if you insist on such blackmail. But——"

He got no further. With a wordless yell of fury Tom Price leaped forward. His left fist caught Legrand squarely on the point of the jaw.

The composer crashed to the floor like a polled ox, and lay quivering and senseless at Price's feet.

With scarcely a glance at his foe, Tom strode from the suite. Along the corridor he reeled, his brain afire. Around a corner he went blindly, aimlessly, then around another. Presently he found himself at a stair-head. Without waiting for the elevator, he lurched down the two flights of stairs to the lobby. There he sank into a chair and tried to think clearly.

It was a long time before his brain could be forced into normal reasoning. Then, bit by bit, he began to review the scene he had just enacted with Legrand. And on cooler reflection, Tom was more and more impressed with the belief that the composer had been lying to him.

None of Price's memories of Laura bore out Legrand's vile hints. She loved her husband. She had solemnly promised to be true. She would not break her pledged word. For some purpose of his own, Legrand had tried to blacken her in Tom's eyes.

"That man needs a good deal worse thrashing than I gave him," muttered Price at last, getting to his feet. "And I'm going back to give it to him. I'll hammer him into confessing the truth about Laura, even if I go to jail for it."

He retraced his steps toward Legrand's third-floor suite.

The composer in the meantime had gradually recovered from the knock-out blow. Rising bewilderedly from the floor, he blinked about him, then began to nurse his swelling jaw.

A tap at the door aroused him, and cleared his muddled brain. For he recognized Laura's voice, calling for admittance.

"Come in," he answered.

"Where is he?" queried Laura, eagerly looking about her.

"Where is—who?" he evaded.

"Where is Tom? I met the manager in the hall just now. He says Tom is here and that he came to your suite to find me."

Legrand was doing some rapid thinking, despite his brain's jarred condition. He had lost his carefully planned game. Tom's arrival had spoiled everything. And more than probably when Laura should hear what had passed between her husband and himself, she would abandon the tour. Unless—unless she really loved Legrand. And that must be decided at once.

Without answering Legrand caught her in his arms, and held here there despite her struggles. He sought to raise her face to his. She pushed him back, but he grasped her the more closely to him.

Her outflung hand fell by chance upon the hilt of the danger that lay on the piano. Her fingers closed convulsively about it.

Scarcely realizing what she did, and thinking only to fend off the hateful face that pressed so fiercely toward her own, the frantic woman struck out wildly at the man who had seized her.

Legrand's grip relaxed. He gave a coughing gasp, then collapsed in a lifeless heap at her feet.

Laura still holding the dagger whose keen edge had severed Legrand's carotid artery looked down blankly at the dying man. Seeing the blood on the blade she shrieked—again and again, until the whole corridor re-echoed with her cries.

Tom Price, nearing the suite door, was first of fifty running people to reach the spot. As he entered the room Laura dropped the dagger and ran toward him with arms outstretched.

"Tom!" she wailed hysterically. "Oh, Tom! I have come back to you at last. You were right when you said this was no life for me. Take me home!"

"Here!" rasped the house detective, rushing into the room at the head of a dozen guests and servants, "what's the trouble?"

He caught sight of Legrand and of the dagger at his side.

"Who did this?" he demanded, whirling about to face Tom. "Was it you"

"Yes," answered Tom, evenly, "I did it. I'm ready to pay. It was worth——"

"He did not!" screamed Laura, "It was I! I killed him."

"Come along, both of you," ordered the house detective, puling handcuffs from his pocket. "It's up to the court to decide which of you is going to the chair. All I've got to do is to turn you over to the cops. Come along!"

(End of 9th "Who's Guilty?" Story.)

There was one child, Theodosia, by this marriage and it is interesting to recall that this Theodosia was the apple of her father's eye during his entire life and that she was one of the most brilliant women of the period. For many years after the death of Mrs. Burr, Aaron Burr remained a widower and it was not till he was seventy-eight that he remarried. The lady of his choice this time was Madame Jumel, the widow of a French merchant of much wealth.

Maria Theresa de Camp whose wedding anniversary also occurs on July 2, was a Viennese by birth and she made her way to England with her family, a troupe of professional dancers.

At the age of six, in the year 1780, she made her debut as Cupid in a popular London production, and even then she showed that she was sufficiently graceful of body and lithe of toe to give promise of making a fine dancer. Later she is described as "a delightful, dark eyed girl, whose motion itself was music ere her voice was heard. Before she was twenty she had become an actress and when she was thirty-two she married Charles Kemble, who was a year her junior. Charles Kemble, a very successful actor of his day, was a member of the celebrated Kemble family of actors and a brother of Sarah Siddons, whose name stands without peer in the list of English tragic actresses.

(Copyright, 1916.)

TYPES

By SARA MOORE

COLOR.

Every evening she watched for three feet of sunset.

The deep gash between two tenements on which her window faced was turned toward the west at an angle that gave her an outlook about as wide as fifty-nine-cent shantung silk. Every evening it was different. Often it was as hard and gray as the taffeta she sold to old ladies. Sometimes it was a quivering blue that made her heart hurt, a happy sort of pain more satisfying than the waves of joy that came when sweeps of rose and gold and violet made her dizzy with beauty. She hoped, when she became more experienced, to sell on the third floor instead of in a bargain basement, but she sometimes doubted if handling evening cloaks and party dresses of silk and silver and velvet would ever mean as much to her as the wonderful tints that were spread free for everybody to see—way over there behind New Jersey.

There was a time when her craving for color had been denied even a strip of sky. That was when they lived in Grand street, on the first floor facing an inner court. Everything in that neighborhood was dull—gray, brown or black that had withered into green. There were spots of color in the head 'kerchiefs and shawls of the old women and in spring the push carts peddled geraniums, pansies and sickly strings of ivy. She had never owned anything bright except some red hair ribbons and an imitation coral necklace. The geranium she bought with painfully saved pennies had died. At school, Delena had to wear the faded, discarded clothes of older sisters who were wage earners, and when she grew old enough to go to work the management of the department store ruled that she must always wear black.

Because she listened to the advice of the store's welfare woman, Delena never made the mistake of her older sisters who vented their suppressed love of color in Sunday clothes of cheap satin. In a little talk on taste, the woman had remarked that no real lady ever indulged in anything that was loud or shoddy, and the little Italian from the department store basement heeded because she liked the welfare woman for not using what she had come to call a "settlement-house voice." The woman scolded her charges, advised them, instructed them, but no one had ever heard her patronize even a little cash girl.

"Mrs. Henry's going to have a new office," Delena overheard one morning. "The old man is going to let her pick out anything she wants to furnish it. No limit. I bet it will be elegant. Mrs. Henry acts like a real swell and knows a lot of them. I'll bet that the way she fixes up that new office will be somethin' just grand."

Delena made an excuse to visit the new ofice. She wanted to feast her eyes on the sort of grandeur that the welfare woman would approve. On the threshold she paused, while her look of beaming anticipation was changed to one of disappointment and grief.

"Why, they said the old man was going to do things just handsome, for you Mis' Henry. Ain't he the ole skinflint! Why, you oughta have the best office in the place."

Mrs. Henry looked puzzled.

"Don't you think it is? she asked.

Delena shook her head at the gray walls and floors and dull blue "wash" hangings. Even the wooden and wicker furniture was gray. There was very little of it. Except for the amber shades on the lights and at the windows and a few jonquils stuck upright in a flat dish that cost no more than thirty-nine cents, there was not a bit of brightness in the place.

"It's so bare—these Jap rugs when you might have had a real plushlike carpet. And a lot of things to make it look brighter and real elegant."

Mrs. Henry might have laughed and changed the subject, but something in the girl's brooding face made her ask:

"Don't you think the room looks cool?"

"Yes," admitted the young critic.

"Having plain furniture and neutral tints makes it look larger and—fresher and restful. I spent a whole day looking for the right shade of blue to go with the French gray," explained the welfare woman tactfully.

Delena nodded, unconvinced.

"But—everything's dull!" she cried. "Outside it has gotta be. But here—you could do so different. Oh, I get so tired of seeing things look so all alike, streets and clothes and walls. Honest, if it wasn't for the billboards and the sunsets I just couldn't stand this city sometimes."

Mrs. Henry was not a welfare woman by an eight-hour clock. She was an ideal teacher, a genius with a love of people which forced her to share with them every good thing she learned.

"You'd like the new art stuffs," she exclaimed brightly. "I'll notify your floor manager that I want you for an hour and we'll go up to the interior decorating floor. The man in that department can tell us so much about brilliant colorings—and how to use them. I'm sure you'll love to see some of the new shades—and to learn where they belong."

Delena, blushing at being introduced by her full name, Magdalena, listened and looked—and enjoyed. She was too ignorant to digest or apply any of the wisdom of the expert colorist, but her thought was stimulated and she went back to her own counter silent and dreaming." Next day, Mrs. Henry sent her a ticket to an exhibition of futurist and cubistic and modernist art. She giggled at most of it, but lingered over the costume drawing of Baskt.

"I'd like to make up things like that because they are so crazy," she told the welfare women. "But, of course, no one would wear them. They ain't designed for people who have to always wear ready-mades."

If this story were published in a fifteen-cent magazine Magdelena would be sent to a night school, where her color sense would have been trained until she became a great interior decorator or painter or costumer. But a writer for newspapers has the advantage of being privileged to tell a few unromantic truths. Mrs. Henry did direct the girl to a night art school and even obtained for her a raise in salary which covered the necessary fees. But, three months later, Delena met and admired the handsome young superintendent of an adjoining apartment house. In three months more they were married. In a little less than two years after she had first become interested in Delena, Mrs. Henry was informed that the thirty-fifth daughter of her department store family was to be Deborah Henry Doldini. Accompanied by her own daughter, she went to call.

Mrs. Delena Doldini was very "well to do," according to neighborhood standards, and Mrs. Henry wondered if the new home would be planned according to the theory of the "dull" gray office or the demand for "something elegant" that was part of the girl's untrained taste. A hot, smotheringly red wall paper greeted her in the entry. A deep rose wall paper, covered with a splashy satiny figure, adorned the "parlor." A rose rug that verged on purplish red covered the floor and a "set" with brocaded upholstery was tangled in between many tables of gilt and mahogany.

The center of attraction in the little flat was, of course, the thirty-fifth Deborah Henry, who reclined in a pink-hung bassinet, her plump legs and wrists tied with gay satin bows. Mrs. Doldini, very proud and very plump and rosy, wore a yellow silk negligee with purple stockings and slippers, and a pale blue boudoir cap. She was bolstered up on a divan covered with cushions of velvet and silk in all shades of green, orange, red, purple and blue. Many of them were heavily embroidered with magenta roses and gold dragons. A hand-painted jardiniere held a burst of pink chrysanthemums. Several hand-painted plaques and embroidered table covers and gay lamp shades added to the effect of decorative extravagance.

"You see, we are very comfortable here," observed the young mother with pride.

Mrs. Henry and her daughter had scarcely closed the street door behind them when the young woman laughed, gasped and made a geeture of horror.

"Did you ever see anything so awful?" she cried.

"It isn't awful. It is beautiful," insisted the welfare woman very firmly. Magdalena's love for color was once starved—and now she is happy because she can buy plenty of it. I didn't succeed in training it to the point of good taste—but, thank heaven, I didn't succeed in destroying it, either."

"You mean?"

"Well, Deborah Henry Doldini may get a better education than her mother. I shouldn't be surprised if she turned out to be a great painter. The Lord is a good manager and He'll probably use that color sense somewhere. He never would create a passion as strong and as beautiful as that and let our fool civilization waste it all."

(Copyright, 1916.)

YOUR WEDDING DAY

AND

The Famous Men and Women Who Have Shared It.

July 2—Aaron Burr and Theodosia Prevost, Charles Kemble and Maria Theresa de Camp.

By MARY MARSHALL.

Aaron Burr was ten years younger than his first wife, whom he married one hundred and thirty-four years ago today. No doubt their friends at the time predicted all sorts of unhappiness as a result of this discrepancy of ages just as folk do nowadays when a young man of twenty-six signifies his intention of marrying a woman of thirty-six, but young Burr was determined and so was Mrs. Theodosia Prevost, and they became man and wife.

The unhappiness that was predicted did not come, and in the twelve years of their married life there was nothing but harmony, at least so far as records show us. When at the age of forty-seven Mrs. Burr died, her disconsolate husband wrote to a friend: "The mother of my Theo was the best woman and the finest lady I have ever known." Theo was their daughter.

The fact that Aaron Burr's married life with Theodosia Prevost was so happy is especially interesting in view of the fact that he was not exactly of the clay of which model husbands are usually made. His biographers speak of him as "a perfect man of the world," and, indeed, he aimed at this ideal rather more than any of the other men who made up the group of leaders in the American revolution. He was an exceedingly handsome man, with eyes that were jet black, and although actually not over five feet six inches in height he gave the impression, because of his military carriage, of being of tall proportions. He met Mrs. Prevost when he was twenty-three and he was from the first much attracted by this widow, whose husband, an English army officer, had recently died in the West Indies. She had two sons and it is not surprising that Aaron Burr should have been eager to help her with her task of educating these children, an interest, by the way, which he did not forget after he had married her. The widow was living in New Jersey, and her well-appointed home there was frequented by many other of the American officers, who enjoyed under her roof generous and dignified hospitality. No doubt others of the number lost their hearts, but it remained for the handsome though youthful Aaron to win the lady's heart.

Maria Theresa de Camp whose wedding anniversary also occurs on July 2, was a Viennese by birth and she made her way to England with her family, a troup