

A MAN'S CHOICE

By H. M. Egbert

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I.

All that day Jack Barrett had sat at his desk like a man in a dream. Each successive telephone message had spelled increasing disaster. At first he calculated how much he would have left after the payment of his debts; then he considered the settlement; then he knew there would not even be a settlement. The crash had swept his entire fortune away. Everything was gone. He, the famous Wall street speculator, who had jumped into the game with his father's \$8,000,000 and driven his adversaries before him by sheer pluck and daring, had gone under before their combination.

He was conscious of the looks of his employes. Poor devils, they knew that they would have to look for other jobs soon enough. They were thinking only of themselves, from his high-priced secretary to his office boy.

He brazened it out, meeting visitors, telling the truth. He would not run away. He resolved to face the worst. Nevertheless, it was with vast relief that he left his office at 5 o'clock, to go to the only person who he thought still believed in him, still kept her faith.

Dora Jameson and he had been engaged three months. Her mother was a "climber," her father alternately a bankrupt and a millionaire. Some shady speculative business enabled him to put a bold front toward the world. Jack Barrett had no idea that Dora was of his mettle.

She came into the reception room where he awaited her and he told her everything. And he misunderstood, although he saw her face harden.

"I shall try again for our sakes, dearest," he said.

"That's all very well, but do you think I am going to wait until you have made another fortune?" she pouted.

"Wait, Dora?"

"Yes. Don't you suppose I have other chances?"

"You mean you cared only for my money?"

"You are foolish, Jack. I loved you, but I'm not going to marry a beggar. I must have dresses and servants and money to spend."

Without a word Barrett turned away. This was the end of every-



They Walked Together Under the Palms

thing. He could no longer have faith in anything or any person on earth.

That night he shipped as a common sailor before the mast on a tramp ship bound, ultimately, for the South seas. He dropped his name, everything. He shipped as Thomas