

Book Two describes another branch of Clyde's family, that of an elder brother of his father—Samuel Griffiths, in Lycurgus, New York.

After two years of wandering Clyde seeks out his prosperous relative, and prevails on him to employ him in his factory.

In answer to his son Gilbert's remonstrance he tells him that Clyde's father was never very practical and "I doubt if he has ever had a chance": Gilbert's comment was characteristic:

"Imagine what the bunch around here will say if they find out that our cousin was only a bell-hop before coming here."

Clyde's anomalous position as an employé in his rich uncle's factory was not an easy one. Ignored or patronised by his relatives, and their set, in his loneliness he becomes attracted to Roberta Alden, a girl working under his superintendence, although such an acquaintance was strictly against his uncle's rules.

Roberta was not an easy prey. Her modesty and the simplicity of her upbringing led her to resist his advances, but finally she succumbed to his desires, and allowed him to visit at her room with the inevitable result.

It was at this period that some chance circumstances caused him to be suddenly taken up by the smart set of his uncle's acquaintances, and his inflammable ambitious temperament became at once attracted to a beautiful wealthy girl, Sondra, who half out of vanity accepted his attentions and finally became enamoured with his good looks and charm.

Madly in love with this girl, who represented all in life that he had craved, his one idea was now to rid himself of Roberta, who was to become a mother.

His position is drawn with extraordinary skill—trying on his scanty income to be at one with the ease and luxury of New York at its height—and on the other hand trying to rid Roberta of the condition in which he had placed her.

How corrupt and soul-destroying is the path on which this vain, ambitious boy had set his feet.

What a wonderful psychological study he presents, torn between these two insistent desires.

Finally, as his efforts to destroy the life he has created are frustrated, he decides to destroy the girl who had trusted and loved him, and to this end he takes her out in a boat on the lake. As it happens, *by accident* the boat capsizes, but he swims to shore not heeding her piteous cry for help.

He immediately betakes himself back to the gay picnic party.

"Here he was in this fine car. Sondra waiting for him. If only all went well now—nothing were traced to him! Her beauty! Her love! Her wealth! The beauty of this bright lake, contrasted with the darker one he had left."

The gay talk, Clyde listening intently, yet brooding on all that so desperately concerned him.

Roberta. Maybe they had found her body by now. He shivered as with cold in spite of himself.

"His beautiful, warm, generous Sondra. She so truly loved him. But if she ever should find out. Oh God! And yet all for her if she only knew. All for her!"

His arrest follows quickly in the midst of this light-hearted party.

The horror of the days preceding his trial, the extraordinary cleverness of the description of the trial, the vindictive Mason, thirsting for a conviction, his own counsel, supplied by his uncle, straining every nerve in his favour, and finally, the death sentence, are described in a most arresting manner.

An extraordinary touch of genius is that of Clyde's Puritan middle-aged mother, too poor to afford to be present at her boy's trial, but who conceives the notion of

giving first-hand information to the Press, which she rightly surmises would have a piquant interest for the public, and so earns the necessary money.

On the cruelty of the system which delays the execution of the condemned for a period of two years, it is difficult to comment.

The sombreness of it. The slow and yet searing psychic force. The obvious terror and depression—constant and unshakable—of those who in spite of all their courage and their fears, their bravado, or their real indifference, were still compelled to think and wait. For now in connection with this coldest and bitterest form of prison life he was in constant psychic if not physical contact with twenty other convicted characters of varying temperaments and nationalities, each one of whom, like himself, had responded to some heat or lust or misery of his nature, or his circumstances, and who now found himself immured—in one or another of these cages awaiting—awaiting what?

How well they knew. How well he knew.

The good clergyman, Mr. McMillan, who became much attached to Clyde, found it difficult to convince the excitable, emotional boy of his real guilt in preparation for death.

One is inclined to think this analysis of his varying and confused emotion the cleverest thing in this able study.

"Can you now, truly and positively, as your Creator sees you, say that you were sorry—or that you wanted to save her"?

"It all happened so quick you see," began Clyde, nervously—hopelessly almost, "that I am not just sure. No, I don't know that I was so very sorry. No, I really don't know you see now. Sometimes I think maybe I was a little, sometimes not maybe. But after she was gone and I was on shore, I felt sorry—a little. But I was sort of glad too, you know, to be free, and frightened too— You see—" Mr. McMillan left heavily and miserably burdened by all he had heard.

"And Clyde was left to brood on all he had said. Was he really and truly guilty? Did he really deserve to die for this? Was that what Mr. McMillan would decide? And in the face of all his tenderness and mercy."

The end of this slow torture, and endless self-communing, came at last.

His faithful friend accompanied him to the dread chair, and ten minutes after walked away desolately, uncertainly, through the doors of the prison. He walked hours and hours before he could present himself to Clyde's mother who, on her knees, was praying for the soul of her son.

"I know in Whom I have believed," was part of her prayer.

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

February 6th to March 27th.—Course of eight Lectures on Psychology by Miss Mary Chadwick. 48, Tavistock Square, W.C.1. (Weekly) 3-4 p.m.

February 11th.—Address by Mrs. Strong, F.B.C.N., on the British College of Nurses at the Royal Infirmary, Perth.

February 18th.—Meeting General Nursing Council for England and Wales. 20 Portland Place, W. 2.30 pm.

February 26th.—Meeting of the Council British College of Nurses. 431, Oxford Street, London, W.1. 3 p.m.

March 5th.—Annual Meeting Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland. R.B.N.A. Club, 194, Queen's Gate, S.W.1. 3 p.m.

April 29th.—British College of Nurses Diploma Day. Hoare Memorial Hall, Church House, Westminster, S.W. Presentation of Diplomas to Fellows and Members.

July 27th-30th.—International Council of Nurses, Interim Conference, Geneva, Switzerland.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)