

### Dilemma

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Successful ? . . . . yes, indeed, Brownall was successful, and famous, too. Everybody was aware of the fact. As for success: he had an income of enormous proportions, a few residences, a fleet of cars, several obedient children (so far they had enjoyed unopposed freedom), a loving wife, and a membership in the most exclusive, most expensive, stuffiest club in the city. And fame: who has not heard of Brownall's Beers ? The name of Brownall has been introduced into every community in the land. It has been truthfully said that Brownall's billboards hide the landscape faster than nature can create it. Gurgling infants, imitating their favorite radio announcer, beseech their parents in agonized tones to give Brownall's Beer just one trial: they will never regret it.

Yet in his office on the seventeenth floor sat the rich, the famous Thornton G. Brownall, beer-baron, with his pale face hidden in his hands. On the desk-blotter before him a silvery object threw back the rays of the lamp; he jerked up his head and stared at the thing in horrified fascination. His mind was in a turmoil; a momentous decision must be made, and quickly.

"On my last legs," he gasped, and shivered. It was a knotty problem. What to do ? Should he wait passively while fate approached and overwhelmed him, or should he—and he shuddered again as he contemplated the glittering thing on the blotter—should he take this way out ? Was it a coward's act, to take advantage of this easy release ?

He had proposed the question to himself dozens of times, and had never reached any lasting conclusion. Even after convincing himself that it was the right thing to do, he had faltered at the last moment. He was a self-made man, and proud of it; "self-respect," he whispered to himself. "Hang on . . . hang on just a little longer. Confession of weakness. Perhaps everything will be all right." But no, he knew he was lying.

A little silver clock tinkled the hour of nine. Brownall consulted his wristwatch in confirmation. So late ? Three hours he had wrestled with himself. He stuck out a tentative forefinger and gently poked the object of his



thoughts. Myriad flashes of light broke from its surface; he made a grimace of repugnance.

With eyes thoughtful and a little sad he carried the same forefinger to his temple and caressed the smooth expanse of skin there. It seemed a pity; he was not old . . . And yet—

A quiet, business-like knock sounded at the door. The man at the desk jerked into life, hastily composed his features, flung his arms around the blotter, and bade the knocker come in.

"Ah, it's you, Whatnot."

"Yes, Mr. Brownall. The late edition, sir."

"Yes, yes,—er, thanks. You may go now. Yes, indeed, you may go now. Goodnight, Whatnot."

The secretary gazed at his employer with a growing fear in his eyes. "Goodnight, Mr. Brownall. You all right, sir? You look queer."

"Don't be foolish," replied the other testily. "It's none of your business anyway. Get out." The secretary, shaking his head in perplexity, got out.

No sooner had the door clicked than Brownall clutched the paper and feverishly thumbed through its pages. This was the way he'd make his decision. If any of his friends had resorted to that object—his eyes sought it out on the desk-blotter—why, he'd follow the same course. Yes, he'd go the way his friends went.

Here was his page, his glance hurried down to the bottom left-hand corner. There it was! A large picture of a smiling, vigorous man, captioned with "Famous Author Resorts to Method of Release from Trouble." That settled it. The famous author was one of his dearest friends. To think that he had finally surrendered, after all his talk of stoicism! But no more brooding, Brownall's decision was made.

He quickly tiptoed over and locked the door. Before the window he stopped and surveyed the city,—the city where he had worked and carved out his large fortune. But enough of dreams. A quiet, whimsical smile on his lips, he came back to his desk and dropped into the chair. Here he sat in thought for about a minute. Then his head came up proudly. He fearlessly picked up the glittering object, bowed gravely to a desk-photo of his wife, stripped away the silver wrapper, and with face screwed up in resignation slowly munched his first health-giving cake of Fleischmann's Yeast.