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## THE WOMAN AND THE UNDERWORLD

JOHN LANDESCO<sup>1</sup>

Earlier we were concerned with the absence of conscience or mental conflict in the abrupt transition made by Eddie Jackson from the conventional social world into the criminal world with its own mores. Although the consuming glamor and excitement of the new world of emancipation may obscure mental conflict at the moment of conversion, this conflict of attitudes can be traced definitely in later behavior throughout life.

Five women entered into the life of Eddie Jackson; the Brothel Madame, who mothered him; the Conventional Woman, who bore him a child; the Companionate Woman for whom he cared; the "Rich but Degenerate" woman; and the Woman he Really Loved.

If we viewed the conventional world with its code of approved propriety and decency as the extreme right and the underworld as extreme left, these women occupied, each her own station along the line of transition.

### *The Brothel Madame Who Mothered Him*

One day marked his transition from the world of decency to the underworld; that night occurred his emancipation from a wholesome childhood into a criminal manhood—his first night in a saloon and his first in a brothel. In the saloon he heard his "manly" partners as they planned a great journey. In the brothel he promised to join them on this journey, which was to mould his criminal character forever.

He was introduced to Rose Manson.

"We stayed here until 4 a.m. It was my first drink in a saloon and I thought I was a "big shot," a man among men. We then went to a sporting house on Randolph Street, run by Rose Manson. That building still stands there across from the National Biscuit Company. We bought a few bottles of beer and Oscar Carlson had a girl there at the time. It was my first experience in a sporting house.

"Roy Tracey went home. Before he left we made an engagement for the next evening. I remained there until the time of the engagement the next evening when we boarded a train . . ."

He returned from the journey after three months and went home, where he was shocked by the news of his father's death. His mother

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was dead only a few months. His sister, now head of the house, brought the situation to a crisis. He broke all connections with his home and the world of decency and went to Rose Manson in the "red-light" district. He had definitely aligned himself with the underworld.

"After my return from New York I lived on Curtis Street between Washington and Madison Streets; first as a roomer in the home (not the joint) of Rose Manson, brothel keeper. When her husband was convicted of larceny, I lived with her for seven years, until my conviction to Pontiac in 1897."

Typical of the brothel madame of her time, she was a drunkard, but prosperous. "They had made a lot of money but her husband was a gambler and she a periodical drunkard. She would go on one of these drunks for three weeks at a time."

"She had one of the classiest sporting houses on the West Side . . . known as the looking-glass place." The ceilings and side walls in every room and parlor were lined with mirrors.

"While on these sprees she had a reliable housekeeper who ran the house for her. It brought her \$250 to \$300 every week. (Fifty years ago that was a lot of money.) There were eight to twelve girls in the house. It was located on Randolph Street between Morgan and Carpenter Streets.

It was in the days before the syndicate; she had no one to pay "off." She gave presents and spent over the influential bar.

She had no need for roomers with this income but in her home, not the brothel, she sheltered outcasts. "There were others living at her house during the time when I lived there, all thieves.

"I was 17 years old at the time; she was 35.

"She mothered me on account of my youth from the night of the first day I had gone into the racket.

"I never had a sentiment for her; it was a business proposition with me, a security in case I would need it. As a gambler they took it from me as fast as I got it. I needed her in case of a fall. Craps and faro were my passion.

"I often went to Gerty's for my own fun (indulgence). She was a friend of Rose's and I could always tell her that I had just been there and 'bought beer,' and Rose would make friendly inquiries about Gerty's business. Rose always asked about business at Gerty's."

When he was convicted to Pontiac at the age of 26 he was living at Rose's. He had spent his youth there—13 years, first as a roomer, later as a paramour. Rose came to visit him in prison and brought

Tracey and Carlson, his comrades. They came as cousins and brothers and left him presents and money.

She strained every effort to secure his freedom and either by money or influence tried to reach the most remote sources of power and influence, and enlisted the interest of a legitimate business man, who was also a State's Senator, in Eddie's cause. He made visits and appeared before the board and the warden. Through a chain of intermediaries she tried to reach even Bishop Fallows, the great figure on the Board of Paroles.

When he was released from Pontiac "Rose had 'made up' and was living with Oscar Carlson. She had sold the looking-glass place on Randolph Street. She was a liability to Carlson as she had fallen to doing shop-lifting and drinking plenty."

Eddie made no effort to get her back. She was now a degenerate and a wreck. She made no effort to get him back. He was no longer a boy to be mothered.

#### *The Conventional Wife Who Bore Him a Child*

In a neighborhood of slaughter houses and workmen's cottages Mrs. . . . . ran a fence and served drinks in her home. She introduced Eddie to Nina whom he later married.

"Mrs. . . . . was a famous character. Many thieves hung around her place and a couple of killings had taken place there. She knew this wife of mine from infancy, right in the district. She lived near 39th and Wallace, which was a good district then, but she ran a fence and what is now known as a beer flat. I knew her long before I knew the wife. Her place was an occasional stop for me when I went out stepping in a horse and buggy.

"This Mrs. . . . . was an intermediary. She promoted my marriage to Nina. She argued that I was foolish not to marry. I had money enough laid away and was running around. I ought to settle down to a home. I was drunk when I married.

"Three months after my discharge from parole I married (1900). Nina, my wife, was born and raised on Lowe Avenue, near 30th Street. I knew her brothers as South Water Street men, acquainted with my brother. They knew my record but had no objections to me, though they were working men—teamsters, one a salesman. When I married her I was back on the racket. She was a sales girl in a loop store. We set up housekeeping near 35th and South State Street. This was long before this district became black. It was nearly all Irish and Jewish then.

"Actually I was married and kept house two years with this woman. One child was born to us. To the best of my knowledge this child is still living with her mother, who was remarried. The girl was legally adopted by her stepfather. I supported the mother and later also the child,

for nine years, seven years after our separation. I even supported her through the period of my first penitentiary sentence, which was soon to occur. She took seven years to make up her mind to divorce me.

"We had differences. She wanted me to quit the racket and go to work. There was not much more sentiment about this marriage than about my going with Rose. I don't know why I got married.

"Nina never was in any racket and is decent today. Two days after my marriage I had a home. She was not in the confidence of the mob. I would send her money enough to keep her. I never had any of the boys to visit at the house. I also sent her money to place in the box at 'the Masonic Temple—for I never kept money in banks—I was always afraid of them.

"Three weeks after I married I went to New York. I was gone five weeks. I had no trouble at home but would constantly be going away. I wasn't at home over a week at a time. Sometimes I told her I was going away and the press would expose my pickup in the city. I wanted to escape home, because I had a mother-in-law living at the house, though she was a good woman and always took my end. I was in Boston when the child was born and it was two months old when I came back. I thought the world of the kid. In 1902 my wife and I separated. I was in Chicago more after we separated. I used to like the bright lights."

#### *The Companionate Woman for Whom He Cared*

"I met her through a doctor friend of mine the night she was celebrating her divorce, just after I had separated from my wife. She knew how to 'step out.' In Chicago we were out every night together. We would go to the Drexel, at 39th and the Grove, a high-class place, Ike Bloom's on 22nd Street, and Mike Fritzel's on Madison Street for drinking, dancing and entertainment. We would also go to Sans Souci Park and the Edelweiss.

"She was an American girl, born in the East. She was an attractive looking woman—tall, about five feet eight inches, weighed about 130 or 135 pounds, had studied music and had graduated from a finishing school. She always retained a maid at the house.

"She had China painting as her hobby. She had a baking oven where she would bake 'em and glaze 'em.

"I had a true sentiment for her and would like to have stayed around town all of the time. Every day I was eager to get home. Morning I stayed home until nine o'clock ordinarily, then 'worked' the races until one. After my day's work I came home.

"She liked to dance and she used to read.

"She was a Christian Science practitioner but never charged for her work. I believe she really hoped to reform me.

"I lived with her for five years prior to my prison term—six with the prison term of 1909—and for five weeks after my return.

"When I lived with her I was in town ten months of the year. I liked to be in town—invited friends and throwed wild parties for my thief friends. She was in no racket but she liked these characters. She knew our rackets."

While he was at Joliet Miss ..... remained loyal. "Miss ..... at first petitioned for pardon for me . . . ." "She had a 'special permit,' visiting me every two weeks at Joliet . . . ."

"I returned from prison and went directly to the house of Miss ..... in a good north side neighborhood."

Miss ..... and Eddie had to deceive her parents about Eddie's criminal occupation. "Her folks from the East visited our house three weeks before I went down to Joliet, and stayed for quite a period. Items would appear about me in the newspaper. They would read them but would never dream that I was the man. They would remark, 'There is your namesake again.' I answered, 'I must go down and take a look at that fellow.'"

"The mother-in-law was curious about my business and I told her that I was employed with the Metropolitan Surgical Supply house as manager and the mother-in-law actually came along with me one day to look over the place of business.

"My connection with the Metropolitan was through the body business. They supplied skeletons for doctor's offices and clinics and always had nine or ten bodies lying in vats in some solution bleaching. I often arranged for the purchase of bodies, which at that time was illegal. In order to evade the state vagrancy law, I had arranged with this firm to be on their payroll as manager. They would pay me in checks which I cashed and then returned the cash. When my mother-in-law visited this establishment we took her own to the basement where she viewed four bodies bleaching in the solution. She fainted.

"Miss ..... 's father was a manufacturer in the east. Occasionally he came to Chicago for a cure, which was known as the 'gold cure' and and was given for \$25 a treatment. He took two or three treatments a week. My own guess about his condition was locomotortaxia. He was half simple and walked with a cane.

"My excuse to my in-laws for going out of town (penitentiary) was business on the coast where I had to go to open up a branch.

"Marriage?—it occurred to me but my wife would not release me. I was not divorced. Miss ..... did make two trips to the coast while I was in the penitentiary, and I actually had to arrange for the remailing of all my letters from the coast in order to deceive my 'mother-in-law' (Miss ..... 's mother)."

### *Reform*

"She influenced me to spend only half of what I earned every day and 'stosh' the rest away. When I came out of Joliet I had \$3,300. I was with her five years—until a month after I came home from Joliet. I split with her because she wanted me to quit Pete Collins', a thieves' hangout. She wanted me to quit and go to work. She had plenty of money. We had our trunks packed to go to New York and she wanted to start me in some business.

"I liked this racket for the fascination and freedom. I could lay off any time—my boys never kicked if I wanted to lay off. I would stick

to my business even though I knew that if I stayed I would have more 'falls'."

"Miss ..... 's home life was not too pleasant while I was gone for eleven months. When I returned she insisted on separating me from my old racket and friends to settle down. She wanted to help me start in any business I might choose. I had some money. I cannot say that I did not have plenty of chances, but I liked the excitement of the racket, the politics, and the fixing—the successes and the failures.

"... You see there was a good deal of excitement and interest, and some skill involved in the racket—and it was not so easy to separate from it for the sake of Miss ..... We finally had made up our minds to leave for New York. Our trunks were packed and I decided to let her go ahead, and follow five days later. I never reached New York.

"The interest in my old underworld connections still holds me.

"When we split she had none of my cash. I didn't take any of hers. We are still good friends right today. She is married but has no children."

### *Rich But Degenerate*

"One day, three weeks after Miss ..... left I woke up from a drunk married to Bessie Hertzl. We had been down to Wolf Lake carousing.

"As soon as she (Miss .....) went to New York, I moved up to Bessie Hertzl's place, on West Madison Street. On the day when I left Miss ....., I went on a drunk. Bessie ran a sporting house and I woke up from this drunk living at this house. I had no girl there, just myself. I occupied the front room. The divorce from my first wife occurred two weeks after my release, when my wife no longer thought that I wished to marry Miss ..... The fact that Miss ..... had a 'special permit' to visit me every two weeks at Joliet had convinced my wife that she wanted to marry me. Therefore, she would not divorce me prior to my separation from Miss ..... It was spite.

"One morning, the day after my celebration of my final release from parole from Joliet, I was aroused at 4 p.m. from a deep drunken sleep and was told that I was married. The house had been closed up for the night and the crowd was throwing a party. There were other pickpockets celebrating at the house, though none of them were working with me at this time.

"With the coming of daylight, I wanted to investigate this business of marriage. Later I went to verify it and, as I approached the clerk, with whom I was acquainted, he said, 'You look half-way decent now.' 'When did you see me last?' I asked. 'Yesterday when you got married. I have just received the returns from the judge now.'

"I made her sell the 'house' a week afterward and settled down with her at Kedzie and Ohio Street in a flat. She was a good housekeeper. She had fifteen or twenty thousand dollars after she sold out, and was known to have more diamonds than any landlady on the West Side. We remained together from early 1910 until my next conviction in 1913.

"I divorced Bessie four weeks after my release on parole. I had

sent her to the Hospital for the drug cure. She was on the junk (heroin) and I divorced her when she came out of the cure. She died in 1924 from an overdose of drugs.

*The Wife Whom He Really Loved*

At the time of his third marriage, Jackson was rich; he operated a saloon business and a "mob."

"In 1919 I married the Fanelli girl. She was 23 years old when I married her. (He was 48.) We kept house in Detroit and later in Chicago. When I returned it was to bring her back to be operated for tubercular glands in the throat. No child was born.

"Her father ran five saloons on the West Side. The country going dry made no difference in my business nor her father's business.

"Her father knew my racket; I had known him for 25 years before our marriage. I told her who I was and what I was before I got married to her.

"She had some Liberty bonds which I made her turn over to her mother. She had purchased these out of her wages, earning \$38 per week at office work.

"She had lived a strict life at home, and before our marriage I could not take her out alone unless we were accompanied by a brother or sister. We were never out together after 11 o'clock. I met her through a lady friend, who was the switchboard operator at the same firm.

"The Fanelli girl was the only girl I ever had any love for. I thought more of her than of anybody I had ever known. She was a very good cook, of the best. I could bring anybody to the house. She always asked me to bring friends up. All she wanted to know was how many.

"She never kicked about my gambling or anything else. We would come to Chicago every two months or so, for a good time. I would go out on a drunk. We stayed at a loop hotel two or three days at a time. She would go to her mother's and be there when I called for her in the evening. Sometimes I did not call for her until the next morning. When I gambled in a hot game I would call her up to bring me more funds, and she did. Her mother kicked about this but my wife would say, 'It's Eddie's. He is the one who is getting it.' We would go to the movies together.

"We had planned a trip to New York but it stopped at Buffalo. One of my old pals in Buffalo warned me that the new Jostling law was operating in New York, a sort of habitual criminal act, which I was afraid to face as a stranger. The trip eastward was stopped through a fake telegram which stated that I was wanted in Cleveland.

"This Fanelli girl lived with me until the time of my last conviction. With her I lived the life of a home man. She was against drink with the exception of beer at home. If we went to a saloon to drink, or the road-houses around Detroit, I would sneak to the bar for shots of whiskey and drink beer with her at the table."

"During the sentence of 1924 my wife was very faithful to me, as I



always expected she would be—visited me every two weeks, wrote me every day. She stayed home with her folks in Chicago—she did not go to work, nor did she ever work after our marriage in 1919. She always brought eats, she always was concerned about how I was getting along, always wanted me not to get discouraged. She would wait for me no matter how long I had to stay in. She was secure at her folks.' They had plenty and thought well of me. Her father is now a retired saloonkeeper; he does nothing.

Three years of his hitch passed and she waited. "As soon as the Board gave me the heavy setting (16 months after I entered prison) I began to urge her to get a divorce. 'The best thing you can do is to get a divorce. I have six years and three months to do (I never hoped for merit time) and that's too long to wait. It would ease your mind if you were free and you could stop your weeping.' She wanted to wait. I threatened that when I came out I would go away anyway. 'You're only a young girl. Don't waste your youth, and don't make up with any more thieves.' That's an awful strain to put a woman under when a man's down below. She suffered more than I did the first three years I was down there.

"Conviction for a felony is ground for divorce. She sued. I did not contest. She got her divorce. She wrote to me two or three times; I never answered. I would write at any time via the 'kite,' keepers and trustees, despite regulations, or I could get a special permit from a deputy.

"Six months after the divorce she married a drug clerk—I don't know him.

"I visited her people twice since I am out—the first time the day before Mother's day. I was released on a Friday and the next day I called on her mother and brought her a box of candy and some flowers. They invited me for Sunday dinner; I refused. I didn't want to run into the girl and her husband. I knew they would all be there, Italian fashion, especially that family. Every holiday they all bunch over there. She has five sisters in Chicago, all married, and one in New York; a brother here is also married. All of them are 'legit.' The closest to a crook is the son-in-law in New York—a prize fight promoter."

### *The Woman of the Underworld*

Rose Manson was completely of the underworld, but a woman of character, typical of and the result of the social forces that motivate that social world. She was the prosperous madame of a successful brothel. She mothered the boy criminal. True to her code of underworld solidarity she strove for him, when he found himself in crucial conflict with the enemy, society, during his imprisonment. He wanted her only as a security against "a fall" because as a gambler he might be caught penniless in the meshes of the law. He ran to Gerty for his sex indulgence when he lived with Rose. Because his hours of leisure and amusement came at a period of the day when she was at her business or slept he enjoyed freedom from her companionship.

When she degenerated into a sot and fell in status from brothel madame to shop-lifter he stayed away. She had gone to the extreme left.

*The Mores of the Primary Group*

Nina, the conventional wife who bore him a child, was of the extreme right, of the world of rugged, honest labor, in a neighborhood of workmen's homes. Completely conventional, she wanted him to be a husband, a home-man, and a father. He was a criminal, a gambler, but a worldly man, with easy money and the glamor of the race track and the leading travelling circus about him, in contrast to the neighborhood laborer.

The coming together of Jackson and Nina is typical of the metropolis. This conventional girl was neighborly in her neighborhood. Mrs. . . . ., the fence, was a neighbor who had known her all her life. The conflicting attitudes between these two friends were overlaid by the neighborly relation. In a metropolis one does not "know" his neighbor, and neighborliness may develop among people whose homes are close, even though as often happens in a metropolis they are of contrasting types.

This same tolerance for the neighbor in her own home, by the girl in her home, when the conflicting attitudes were veiled by neighborliness, developed into intolerance and erupted as sharp conflict when the two sets of attitudes were brought under the same roof, in the intimate relations of husband and wife.

In the home Jackson could tell Nina nothing of his occupational life, "the racket." He could not invite to his home the comrades of his social world, the underworld. He went out of town as much as possible and told her he was out of town when he was in Chicago, to escape her companionship.

He had some valid intentions, he established a home. She bore him a child. He supported this wife and child for years, even after he was in prison, though this family contributed nothing to his well being. In fact, Nina retained her claim as legal wife upon him for years after he met the woman for whom he cared. She was spiteful. She divorced him only after she knew the woman he wanted had left him. But he maintained certain obligations to wife and child. These attitudes, in a man who had lived his youth as a brothel-madame's paramour, clearly are remnants of his childhood home. They represent the primary group mores which surrounded Jackson as a child.

*The Marginal Woman*

Miss . . . . . is midway in the line of transition, marginal to both the underworld and the world of convention. As background, Miss . . . . . had the primary group of the small town which controls the behavior of the person rigidly and completely; Miss . . . . . left a small town in the East to come to the metropolis. She had just been delivered from the bondage of a defunct conventional marriage, by a divorce. She sought release in the less rigidly controlled life of the great city. She became a Bohemian, and occupied a marginal position with reference to the conventional groups to which she had previously belonged.

In contrast to the neighborhood of workmen's homes where Nina lived, Miss . . . . . moved into an area of fashionable apartments where contacts were impersonal and free. The metropolis affords every type its habitat. She could have a variety of friends. Here no one concerned himself about the marital status in the relation between a woman and her companion. One could keep his counsel about any phase of his own life.

She found release in art, china painting, dancing, reading, and in a religion of optimism which denies the reality of evil. She sought and liked unconventional characters, colorful and vivid.

On the night of her divorce she celebrated her deliverance by going around to the cafes with a friend, a physician, who knew Eddie. She met Eddie.

Eddie was a colorful character—son of Chicago. He came to live with her. She invited his friends to her home for wild parties, the wickeder the friends the wilder the parties, the freer and more fantastic; the more so, against the background of town life in the beginning of the century. She was not of the underworld, not of the racket, but she heard and knew their rackets in her interest in the sensational.

With Eddie she drank, danced and dined at all kinds of resorts, at Bloom's and Fritzel's as well as Edelweiss and Sans Souci. Bloom's was a levee music hall in the South Side red-light district, Fritzel's the same type of place in the west side levee. But Edelweiss was a fashionable beer garden where Thomas' Symphony Orchestra played; and Sans Souci was an amusement park for all classes.

When her parents came to visit her she and her man-companion concealed his criminality from their conventional eyes by deceit and concealed their liaison by telling them they were married.

Then prison, after five rollicking years. She loved him, as is

proved by her daily letter, a visit every two weeks to the old prison, her efforts to get him released, all the involvements and contacts of a petition for pardon which finally, for political reasons, he dared not use.

Upon his release from prison, he went directly to her apartment. She wanted him to leave Chicago, to change his ways and his friends. The prison experience had changed her (not him), had sobered her; the lark was over, the feast of freedom embittered. She insisted. He allowed her to leave. He could not leave his underworld.

He cared for her; he could not marry her; she left. He went back deep into the underworld, to the extreme left to Bessie Hertzels' brothel and moved in.

Bessie was the divorced wife of a saloonkeeper, who became wealthy in the days of the cabaret. When, at the beginning of the Volstead era, the old brewers sought ways of carrying on, this man introduced gangsters to brewers, to front as owners of the brewery. The gangsters became beer barons. In 1910 Bessie was his divorced wife. She ran a sporting house in the West Side levee.

Eddie lived there. When his discharge from parole arrived, there was a celebration at the house. Pickpocket mobsters were the guests, the joint was closed to the public for the night, a drunken orgy followed.

Eddie, sobered from this drunk, discovered he was married to Bessie.

She was rich, had more diamonds than any other brothel madame, the house was paying. But Eddie made her sell the joint and set up a home.

She came in and went out of his life without arousing a sentiment. She was too far to the left—a sot, a dope fiend; Nina had been too far to the right.

He gave her the cure and divorced her.

#### *The Fanelli Girl Whom He Loved*

During the beer-war in Chicago the gangster funerals of pomp and ostentation excited great public interest. The man and his family became front page and pictorial news, everything about their life became of interest. Perhaps, the most striking fact was the wholesomeness and conservative mode of the home life when contrasted to the life of the gangster husband in contraband and gang-warfare.

In many communities in Chicago, family morality is a higher value than any other of the moral values. Husband and marriage are fate. The highest tenet of this code is that the husband must make the living for the family. How he makes that living, what he does outside the home, is the husband's business.

The Fanelli girl came from a group under this code. She was wholesome, conservative, and loyal. She was sympathetic with the ways and friends of her husband regardless of her own preferences. Only once she objected to a venture of his; when he wanted to go into saloon business (though after prohibition), and then her objection was only because it would interfere with his coming home evenings. He loved her and respected her wholesomeness. She was of the right, but she left the way open for him to go and come from right to left and back again when and as often as he wanted to. She was the only one he ever really loved, as his sacrifices for her evidence. When he loved it was a girl on the right.

#### *Origin of Attitudes*

If we did not discover a mental conflict earlier, we discover these varied attitudes toward his women, substantially the attitudes he brought from the home of his childhood, the primary group.

More clearly than is evident in any other phase of Eddie Jackson's life, his relations to women reflect the attitudes which he brought from the home of his childhood, the first intimate group to mold his personality. Although he had contacts with women of the underworld, his two serious attempts at conventional marriage were with women of conventional standards. Nevertheless, marriage and love were always secondary to his interest in crime and each relationship which restricted and hampered him was broken. Nevertheless, he could not permanently satisfy himself with the casual contacts of the brothel, an institution which caters to the man who desires freedom from familial responsibility. His marital ventures thus became a vacillation between the unrestricting but unsatisfying contacts of the brothel and the satisfying but confining contacts of a near-conventional marriage. He could not fit at all into the completely conventional marriage with Nina nor into the life planned for him by Miss . . . . . after his release from prison. His life as a pickpocket demanded that he should have freedom to come and go and that he must always take into account the possibility of a long prison sentence which would seriously interrupt the course of domestic life.