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## **The Road to Ruin**

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**A TALE OF TWO CITIES**

**SELIG POLYSCOPE CO., Inc.**

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CHICAGO, - - - U. S. A.

## THE ROAD TO RUIN

A picture drama of one woman's life. A great moral lesson of such virile strength and unquestionable truth that no young woman who sees it can help but be the better able to resist temptation of a like nature.

Norene Black, a beautiful English girl, has married and emigrated to Australia with her stalwart husband, and they are living the simple life in the land of quick fortunes and blasted hopes. He engaged in mining, which at the time of our story's opening, has only proved big in prospect. The girl wife has tired of this existence, with its loneliness, hardships and struggle and longs to return to the gay world she has left. We witness a quarrel between husband and wife. He tries to pacify her and buoy up her spirits with the assurance that he will yet strike it rich and take her back to happiness, ease and luxury in that England they both know and love. But the demon of unrest has entered the young girl's soul. He no sooner leaves for his work at the mines than she determines to end it all. She pens a few brief lines, telling him it will be useless for him to look for her, as she prefers death to the loneliness of the life she is leading here. Suicide, however, has no place in her thoughts. She gets together a few necessities and taking what money they have, makes her first false step down the Road to Ruin and desertion.

We next see her board the steamer at Melbourne. "The last of you, Australia, and of him. I have youth and beauty; they shall help me carve out a brilliant social future in England." Then we see the steamer in mid-ocean, homeward bound. She arrives, secures a position as governess in the country house of a well-to-do English Squire. While here she meets a wealthy widower, a Mr. Hamilton by name, who falls in love with her, and six months later the deluded girl marries him. "Who will ever know of my previous marriage? He is on the other side of the world." Bigamy—and so the path of crime opens before her, with its inevitable pitfalls.

Mr. Hamilton's son brings home a visitor. Norene enters the breakfast room. "Wife, let me introduce my son's friend from Australia." She turns to greet the guest and faces the husband she deserted. A spasm of horror, one brief moment of suspense. "Will he betray me now?" and she hears as if in a dream the man she so cruelly wronged saying, "Excuse my surprise, but I have met Mrs. Hamilton before." The girl pulls her frightened faculties together and replies, "Why, yes, we knew each other in Australia." She knows the reprieve is only temporary, for she has read in the eyes of the man she betrayed that she need expect no mercy from him. Watching her opportunity, a servant is dispatched with a note. "Meet me at the old stone well in the park. I must see you alone; then let exposure come." The pathway of crime once trodden gives its victim no rest. One crime leads on to another. It is the inevitable law laid down by the all-wise Creator. Norene knows that the wall of that old well is unsafe. Time, the destroyer, has weakened the masonry. "I'll lure him there, and if the chance comes he shall never cross my path again." They meet; the woman feigns faintness. "Water! Dip my handkerchief in the bucket." The man does so. A blow on the head with her heavy riding stock, and as her husband turns to defend himself the desperate woman pushes him with all her strength against the rotten wall. A crash, and the victim has disappeared. "Dead men tell no tales."

She flees back to her room, but fate again turns the tables on the criminal. Mark Fielding, a drunken inn-keeper, is paying court to one of Mrs. Hamilton's maids, and as he passes, overhears Mrs. Hamilton and her stepson's guest in high words. He conceals himself in the shrubbery, witnesses the deed, and alive to his own interests, secures a ladder and with the aid of a strong rope rescues the unconscious man, secretly conveying him to the hospital of a neighboring town, telling the authorities that the man is a relative of his who has met with an accident. We next see the son and Mr. Hamilton's servants beating the woods and search-



ing for the missing guest. A few days later Mrs. Hamilton receives an unwelcome caller. Fielding confronts her with the fact that he saw the murder committed, and demands hush money. "Just as I thought I was free, this new danger threatens." Fielding's visits become frequent. She robs her indulgent husband to meet his demands. We see Fielding visit the hospital and pay the doctors to care for the patient, who is fighting for his life in the grasp of brain fever. The son's suspicions are aroused when he witnesses a meeting between his step-mother and the drunken inn-keeper. He confronts her. "Why do you pay that man money?" A quarrel ensues; the father enters. "Husband, he insulted me!" cries the desperate woman. The father sides with his young wife, and the son is ordered from the house, determined to put his suspicions to the test. He takes up quarters at Fielding's inn, plies him with liquor, hoping to learn the truth. In an unguarded moment Norene hears, through her former maid, now Fielding's wife, of this new danger. The necessity of another crime is again apparent. She calls at the inn, learns the location of the step-son's room, finds Fielding in a drunken stupor, sends the wife on a false errand, and after setting fire to the building, locks both men in and makes good her retreat unobserved. The son awakes in time to realize his danger, smashes the window of his room and leaps to safety. But Fielding, in his stupefied condition, staggers up the stairs, only to fall crushed and bleeding before the locked door. He is rescued, but only after being fatally burned. He tells the son the woman's secret. The first victim of her treachery, now convalescent, and the dying man Fielding are brought to the mansion, and Norene's sins find her out. An officer steps forward to handcuff her after the accusations. But her crime-stained brain can no longer bear the strain, and she realizes that she has indeed reached the end of the Road to Ruin. She darts up the steps of the magnificent mansion where her pretence has brought such shame and horror, her heart breaks, and with a scream of agony, she falls dead in the arms of her captors.