

# Jane Cable

By George Barr McCutcheon

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Author of "Beverly of Graustark," Etc.

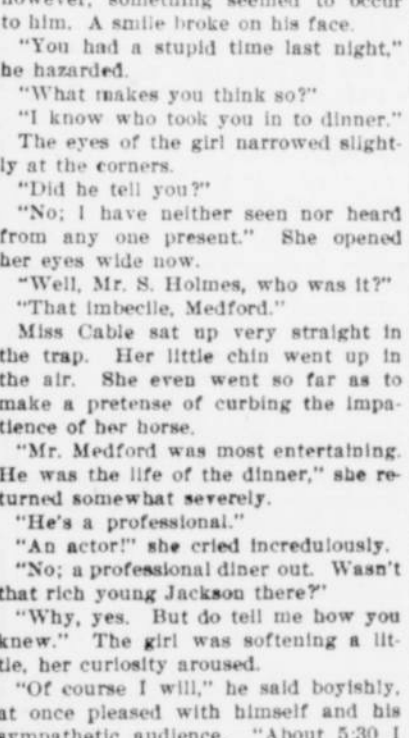
How for a man's natural inclination toward evil may carry him, despite the fact that his wrongdoing involves the wrecking of the happiness of his only son, is well shown in this story of Chicago, the Philippines and New York. The tale is not all one of evil, however. In it figure also love and romance, daring and danger, patriotism and the self-sacrificing if mistaken devotion of the Filipino to his country's cause. Our narrative is essentially one of modern times, and its characters or their originals walk the streets of American cities today, but their actions and the story of their loves and hates recall with distinct force the scenes and persons depicted by Dickens. Especially is this true of Elias Droom, the elderly lawyer's clerk, who is worthy of comparison with any one to be found in the pages of the English master.



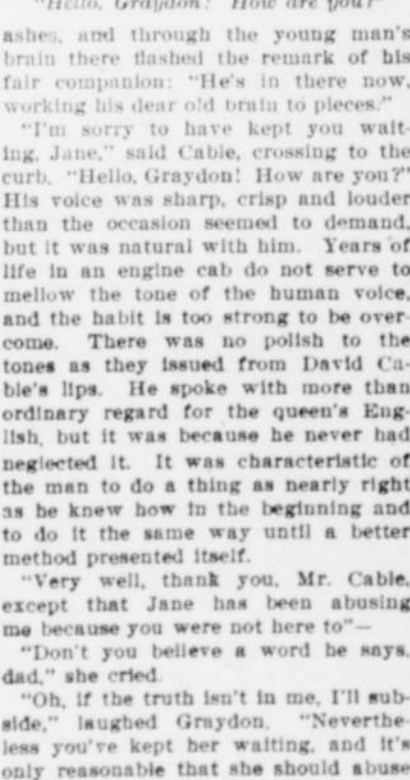
## CHAPTER I.

IT was a bright, clear afternoon in the late fall that pretty Miss Cable drove up in her trap and waited at the curb for her father to come forth from his office in one of Chicago's tallest buildings. The crisp, caressing wind that came up the street from the lake put the pink into her smooth cheeks, but it did not disturb the brown hair that crowned her head. Well groomed and graceful, she sat straight and sure upon the box, her gloved hand grasping the yellow reins firmly and confidently. Miss Cable looked neither to right nor to left, but at the tips of her thoroughbred's ears. Slender and tall and very aristocratic she appeared, her profile alone visible to the passersby. After a very few moments' waiting in her trap the smart young woman became impatient. A severe little pucker settled upon her brow, and not once, but many times, her eyes turned to the broad entrance across the sidewalk. She had telephoned to her father earlier in the afternoon, and he had promised faithfully to be ready at 4 o'clock for a spin up the drive behind Spartan. At three minutes past 4 the pucker made its first appearance, and how, several minutes later, it was quite distressing. Never before had he kept her waiting like this. She was conscious of the fact that at least a hundred men had stared at her in the longest ten minutes she had ever known. From the bottom of a very hot heart she was beginning to resent this scrutiny when a tall young fellow swung around a nearby corner and came up with a smile so full of delight that the dainty pucker left her brow as the shadow does from the sunshine. His hat was off and poised gallantly above his head, his right hand reaching up to grasp the warm little tan coat outstretched to meet it. "I knew it was you long before I saw you," said he warmly. "True? How interesting!" she responded, with equal warmth. "Something psychic in the atmosphere today?" "Oh, no," he said, reluctantly releasing her hand. "I can't see through

discouraging to one's conceit. I'm in a very disagreeable humor today," she said, in fine despair. "I don't believe it," he disputed graciously. "But I am," she insisted, smiling brightly. His heart was leaping high—so high that it filled his eyes. "Everything has gone wrong with me today. It's pretty trying to have to wait in front of a big office building for fifteen minutes. Every instant I expect a policeman to come up and order me to move on. Don't they arrest people for blocking the street?" "Yes, and put them in awful, rat swarming dungeons over in Dearborn avenue. Poor Mr. Cable, he should be made to suffer severely for his wretched conduct. The idea of—" "Don't you dare to say anything mean about dad," she warned. "But he's the cause of all the trouble. He's never done anything to make you happy or—" "Stop! I take it all back. I'm in a perfectly adorable humor. It was dreadfully mean of me to be half angry with him, wasn't it? He's in there now working his dear old brain to pieces, and I'm out here with no brain at all," she said ruefully. To the ingenious youth such an appeal to his gallantry was well nigh irresistible, and for a moment it seemed as if he would yield to the temptation to essay a brilliant contradiction, but his wits came to his rescue, for, quickly realizing that not only were the frowning rocks of offense to be avoided, but likewise the danger of foundering helplessly about in the inviting quicksands of insanity, he preserved silence, wise young man that he was, and trusted to his eyes to express an eloquent refutation. At last, however, something seemed to occur to him. A smile broke on his face. "You had a stupid time last night," he hazarded. "What makes you think so?" "I know who took you to dinner." The eyes of the girl narrowed slightly at the corners. "Did he tell you?" "No; I have neither seen nor heard from any one present." She opened her eyes wide now. "Well, Mr. S. Holmes, who was it?" "That imbecile, Medford." Miss Cable sat up very straight in the trap. Her little chin went up in the air. She even went so far as to make a pretense of curbing the impatience of her horse. "Mr. Medford was most entertaining. He was the life of the dinner," she returned somewhat severely. "He's a professional." "An actor?" she cried incredulously. "No; a professional diner out. Wasn't that rich young Jackson there?" "Why, yes. But do tell me how you knew." The girl was softening a little, her curiosity aroused. "Of course I will," he said joyfully, at once pleased with himself and his sympathetic audience. "About 5:30 I happened to be in the club. Medford was there, and, as usual, catering to Jackson, when the latter was called to the phone. Naturally I put two and two together." He paused to more thoroughly enjoy the look of utter mystification that hovered on the girl's countenance. It was very apparent that this method of deduction through addition was unsatisfying. "What Jackson said to Medford on his return," the young man continued, "I did not hear, but from the expression on the listener's face I could have guessed that an invitation had been extended and accepted. Oh, we boys have got it down fine. Garrison is—" "And who is Garrison?" "Garrison is the head door man at the club. It's positively amazing the number of telephone calls he receives every afternoon from well known society women." "What about? And what's that got to do with Mr. Medford taking me in to dinner?" "Just this: Suppose Mrs. Rowden—" "Mrs. Rowden?" The girl was non-plused. "Yes—wants to find out who's in the club. She phones Garrison. Instantly, after ascertaining which set, young or old, is wanted, from a small card upon which he has written a few but choice names of club members he submits a name to her." "Really, you don't mean to tell me that such a thing is actually done?" exclaimed Miss Cable, who as yet was so socially so unsophisticated as to be horrified. "You're joking, of course?" "But nine times out of ten," ignoring the interruption, "it is met with. 'Don't want him?' Another. 'Makes a bad combination?' A third. 'Oh, no, my dear, not a dollar to his name—hopelessly ineligible?' This last exclamation, though intended solely for the visitor at her home, elicits from Garrison a low chuckle of approval of the speaker's discrimination, and presently he must be some one else." Then, to her heart, she is informed that Mr. Jackson has just come in, and he is requested to come to the phone. Garrison being dismissed with thanks and the expectation of seeing her butler in the morning. "How perfectly delicious!" came from the girl. "I can almost hear Mrs. Row-



den telling Jackson that he will be the dearest boy in the world if he will dine with her." "And bring some one with him, as she is one man short," laughed Graydon, as he wound up lightly. "And here is where the professional comes in. We're all on to Medford! Why, Garrison has half a dozen requests a night—six times five—\$50. Not had—but then the man's a 'who's who' that never makes mistakes. I won't be positive that he does not draw pay from both ends. For, men like Medford, outside of the club, probably tip him to give them the preference. It would be good business." There was so much self satisfaction in the speaker's manner of uttering these last words that it would not have required the wisdom of one older than Miss Cable to detect that he was thoroughly enjoying his pose of man of the world. He was indeed young, for he had yet to learn that not to disillusion the girl, but to conform as much as possible to her ideas, was the surest way to win her favor, and his vanity surely would have received a blow had not David Cable at that moment come out of the doorway across the sidewalk, pausing for a moment to converse with the man who accompanied him. The girl's face lighted with pleasure and relief, but the young man, regarding uneasily the countenance of the general manager of the Pacific, Lakes and Atlantic Railroad company, saw that he was white, tired and drawn. It was not the keen, alert expression that had been the admiration of every one; something vital seemed to be missing, although he could not have told what it was. A flame seemed to have died somewhere in his face, leaving behind a faint suggestion of



that brought a new brightness to her eyes and a proud throbbing to her heart, but he did not observe the effect.

"Bright, clever chap—that Graydon Bansemmer," he said comfortably.



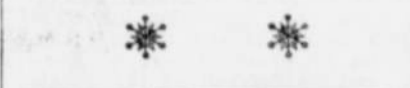
## CHAPTER II.

HE general manager of the Pacific, Lakes and Atlantic Railroad system had had a hard struggle of it. He who begins his career with a shovel in a locomotive cab usually has something of that sort to look back upon. There are no roses along the pathway he has traversed. In the end, perhaps, he wonders if it has been worth while. David Cable was a general manager. He had been a fireman. It had required twenty-five years of hard work on his part to break through the chrysalis. Packed away in a chest upstairs in his house there was a grimy, greasy, unwholesome suit of once blue overalls. The garments were just as old as his railroad career, for he had worn them on his first trip with the shovel. When his wife implored him to throw away the "detestable things," he said, with characteristic humor, that he thought he would keep them for a rainy day. It was much simpler to go from general manager to fireman than vice versa, and it might be that he would need the suit again. It pleased him to hear his wife sniff contemptuously. David Cable had been a wayward, venturesome youth. His father and mother had built their hopes high with him as a foundation, and he had proved a decidedly insecure basis, for one night in the winter of 1883 he stole away from his home in New York. Before spring he was fighting in the far southland, a boy of sixteen carrying a musket in the service of his country. At the close of the civil war Private Cable, barely sixteen, returned to his home, only to find that death had destroyed his happiness. His father had died, leaving his widowed mother a dependent upon him. It was then philosophically he realized that labor alone could win for him, and he stuck to it with rigid integrity. In turn he became brakeman and fireman. Finally his determination and faithfulness won him a fireman's place on one of the fast New York Central "runs." If ever he was dissatisfied with the work, no one was the wiser. Railroading in those days was not what it is in these advanced times. Then it meant that one was possessed of all the evil habits that fall to the lot of man. David Cable was more or less contaminated by contact with his rough, ribald companions of the rail, and he glided moderately into the bad habits of his kind. He drank and "gambled" with the rest of the boys; but, by nature not being vicious and low, the influences were not hopelessly deadening to the better qualities of his character. To his mother he was always the strong, good hearted, manly boy, better than all the other sons in the world. She believed in him. He worshipped her, and it was not until he was well up in the twenties that he stopped to think that she was not the only good woman in the world who deserved respect. Up in Albany lived the Widow Coleman and her two pretty daughters, Mrs. Coleman's husband died on the battlefield, and she, like many women in the north and the south, after years of moderate prosperity was compelled to support herself and her family. She had been a pretty woman, and one readily could see where her daughters got their personal attractiveness. Not many doors from the bolsterous little eating house in which the railroad men snatched their meals as they went through, the widow opened a book and news stand. Her home was on the floor above the stand, and it was there she brought her little girls to womanhood. Good looking, barum scaram Dave Cable saw Frances Coleman one evening as he dropped in to purchase a newspaper. It was at the end of June, in 1876, and the country was in the throes of excitement over the first news of the Custer massacre on the Little Big Horn river. Cable was deeply interested, for he had seen Custer fighting at the front in the sixties. Frances Coleman, the prettiest girl he had ever seen, sold him the newspaper. After that, he seldom went through Albany without visiting the little book shop. Tempestuous, even arrogant in love, Cable once convinced that he cared for her, lost no time in claiming her, whether or no. In less than three months after the Custer massacre they were married. Defeated rivals unanimously and enviously observed that the handsomest fireman on the road had conquered the most outrageous little coquette between New York and Buffalo. As a matter of fact, she had loved him from the start; the others served as thorns with which she delightedly pricked his heart into submission. The young husband settled down, renounced all of his undesirable habits and became a new man with such surprising suddenness that his friends marveled and derided. A year of

happiness followed. He grew accustomed to her frivolous ways, overlooked her merry whimsicalities and gave her the "full length of a free rope," as he called it. He was contented and consequently careless. She chafed under the indifference and in her resentment believed the worst of him. Turmoil succeeded peace and contentment, and in the end David Cable, driven to distraction, weakly abandoned the domestic battlefield and fled to the far west, giving up home, good wages and all for the sake of freedom, such as it was. He ignored her letters and entreaties, but in all those months that he was away from her he never ceased to regret the impulse that had defeated him. Nevertheless he could not make up his mind to go back and resume the life of torture her jealousy had begotten.

Then the unexpected happened. A letter was received containing the command to come home and care for his wife and baby. At once David Cable called a halt in his demoralizing career and saw the situation plainly. He forgot that she had "nagged" him to the point where endurance rebelled; he forgot everything but the fact that he cared for her in spite of all. Sobered and conscience stricken, he knew only that she was alone and toiling; that she had suffered uncomplainingly until the babe was some months old before appealing to him for help. In abject humiliation he hastened back to New York, reproaching himself every mile of the way. Had he but known the true situation he would have been spared the pangs of remorse and this narrative never would have been written.

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## CHAPTER III.

IN the city of New York there was practicing at that time a lawyer by the name of Bansemmer. His office, on the top-most floor of a dingy building in the lower section of the city, was not inviting. On leaving the elevator one would abut through narrow halls and finally peered with more or less uncertainty and misgiving at the half obliterated sign which said that James Bansemmer held forth on the other side of the glass panel. It was whispered in certain circles and openly avowed in others that Bansemmer's business was not the kind which elevates the law. In plain words, his methods were construed to debase the good and honest statutes of the land. Once inside the door of his office—and a heavy spring always closed it behind one—there was quick evidence that the lawyer lamentably disregarded the virtues of prosperity, and no matter how they had been courted and won. Although his transactions were in and out of the courts of that great city bore the mark of dishonor, he was known to have made money during the ten years of his career as a member of the bar. Possibly he kept his office shabby and unclean that it might be in touch with the transactions which had their morbid birth inside the grimy walls. There was no spot or corner in the two small rooms that comprised his "chambers" to which he could point with pride. The floors were littered with papers; the walls were greasy and bedecked with malodorous notations, documents and pictures; the windows were smoky and useless; the clerk's desk bore every suggestion of disrepute. But little less appalling to one's aesthetic sense was the clerk himself. Squatting behind his wretched desk, Elias Droom peered across the litter of papers and books with shaky but polite eyes, almost as inviting as the spider who with wily but insidious decorum draws the guileless into his web. If one passed muster in the estimation of the incomprehensible Droom he was permitted in due season to pass through a second oppressive looking door and into the private office of Mr. James Bansemmer, attorney at law and solicitor. It may be remarked at this early stage that, no matter how long or how well one may have known Droom, one seldom lingered to engage in commonplaces with him. His was the most repellent personality imaginable. When he smiled one was conscious of a shock to the nervous system, when he so far forgot himself as to laugh aloud there was a distinct illustration of the word "crunching;" when he spoke one was almost sorry that he had ears. Bansemmer knew but little of this freakish individual's history; no one else had the temerity to inquire into his past or to separate it from his future, for that matter. Once Bansemmer ironically asked him why he had never married. It was a full minute before the other lifted his eyes from the sheet of legal esp. and by that time he was in full control of his passion. "Look at me! Would any woman marry a thing like me?" This was said with such terrible earnestness that Bansemmer took care never to broach the subject again. He saw that Droom's heart was not all steel and brass. Droom was middle aged. His lank body and cadaverous face were con-

structed on principles not generally accredited to nature as it applies to men. When erect his body seemed as if it were a stubborn reed determined to maintain its dignity in the face of the wind. He did not walk; he glided. His long, square chin, rarely clean shaven, protruded far beyond its natural orbit. Indeed, the attitude of the chin gave one an insight to the greedy character of the man. At first glance one felt that Droom was reaching forth with his lower jaw to give greeting with his teeth instead of his hand.

His neck was long and thin, and his turndown collar was at least two sizes too large. The nose was hooked and of abnormal length, the tip coming down over the short upper lip and broad mouth. His eyes were light blue and so intense that he was never known to blink the lashes. Topping them were deep, wavering black eyebrows that met above the nose, forming an ominous, cloudy line across the base of his thin, high forehead. The crown of his head, covered by long,



Droom grinned diabolically as he resumed the rubbing of his hands.

scant strands of black hair, was of the type known as "retreating and pointed." The forehead ran upward and back from the brows almost to a point, and down from the pinnacle hung the veil of hair, just as if he had draped it there with the same care he might have used in placing his best hat upon a peg. His back was stooped, and the high, narrow shoulders were hunched forward eagerly. Long arms and ridiculously thin legs, with big hands and feet, tell the story of his extremities. When he was on his feet Droom was more than six feet tall; as he sat in the low backed office chair he looked to be less than five feet over all. The men had been classmates in an obscure law school down in Pennsylvania. Bansemmer was good looking, forceful and young, while Droom was distinctly his opposite. Where he came from no one knew and no one cared. He was past thirty-five when he entered the school, at least twelve years the senior of Bansemmer.

His appearance and attire proclaimed him to be from the country, but his sophistry, his knowledge of the world and his wonderful insight into human nature contradicted his looks immeasurably. A conflict or two convinced his fellow students that he was more than a match for them in stealth and cunning if not in dress and deportment. Elias Droom had not succeeded as a lawyer. He repelled people, growing more and more bitter against the world as his struggles became harder. What little money he had accumulated—heaven alone knew how he came by it—dwindled to nothing, and he was in actual squalor when later Bansemmer found him in an attic in Baltimore. Even as he engaged the half starved wretch to become his confidential clerk the lawyer shuddered and almost repented of his action.

But Elias Droom was worth his weight in gold to James Bansemmer from that day forth. His employer's sole aim in life was to get rich and thereby to achieve power. His ambition was laudable if one accepts the creed of morals, but his methods were not so praiseworthy. After a year or two of starvation struggles to get on with the legitimate he packed up his scruples and laid them away—temporarily, he said. He resorted to sharp practice, knavery and all the forms of legal blackmail. It was not long before his bank account began to swell. His business thrived. He was so clever that not one of his shady proceedings reacted. It is safe to venture that 90 per cent of the people who were bilked through his manipulations pronounced in the heat of virtuous wrath to expose him, but he had learned to smile in security. He knew that exposure for him meant humiliation for the instigator, and he continued to rest easy while he worked hard.

"You're getting rich at this sort of thing," observed Droom one day after the lawyer had closed a particularly nauseous deal to his own satisfaction. "but what are you going to do when the tide turns?" Bansemmer, irritated on perceiving that the other was engaged in his exasperating habit of rubbing his hands together, did not answer, but merely thundered out, "Will you stop that?" There was a faint suggestion of the possibility of a transition of the hands to claws as Droom abruptly desisted, but smilingly went on: "Some day the other shark will get the better of you, and you'll have nothing to fall back on. You've been building on mighty slim foundations. There isn't a sign of support if the worst comes to the worst," he chuckled.

"It's a large world, Droom," said his employer easily.

"And small also, according to another saying," supplemented Droom. "When a man's down, everybody kicks him. I'm afraid you could not survive the kicking."

Droom grinned so diabolically as again he resumed the rubbing of his hands that the other turned away, with an oath, and closed the door to the inside office. Bansemmer was alone and where Droom's eyes could not see him, but something told him that the grin hung outside the door for many minutes, as if waiting for a chance to pop in and tantalize him.

Bansemmer was a good looking man of the coarser mold—the kind of man that merits a second look in passing, and the second look is not always in his favor. He was thirty-five years of age, but looked older. His face was hard and deeply marked with the lines of intensity. The black eyes were fascinating in their brilliancy, but there was a cruel, savage light in their depths. The nose and mouth were clean cut and pitiless in their very symmetry. Shortly after leaving college to hang out his shingle he had married the daughter of a minister. For two years her sweet influence kept his efforts along the righteous path, but he writhed beneath the yoke of poverty. His pride suffered because he was unable to provide her with more of the luxuries of life. In his selfish way he loved her. Failure to advance made him surly and ill tempered, despite her amiable efforts to lighten the shadows around their little home. When the baby boy was born to them and she suffered more and more from the unkindness of privation James Bansemmer, by nature an aggressor, threw off restraint and plunged into the traffic that soon made him infamously successful. She died, however, before the taint of his duplicity touched her, and he, even in his grief, felt thankful that she never was to know the truth.

At this time Bansemmer lived in comfort at one of the middle class boarding houses uptown, and the boy was just leaving the kindergarten for a private school. Bansemmer's calloused hand had one tender chamber, and in it dwelt the little lad with the fair hair and gray eyes of the woman who had died. Late one November afternoon just before Bansemmer put on his light topcoat to leave the office for the day, Droom tapped on the glass panel of the door to his private office. Usually the clerk communicated with him by signal, a floor button by which he could acquaint his master with much that he ought to know, and the visitor in the outer office would be none the wiser. The occasions were rare when he went so far as to tap on the door. Bansemmer was puzzled and stealthily listened for sounds from the other side. Suddenly there came to his ears the voices of women, mingled with Droom's suppressed but always raucous tones.

Bansemmer opened the door. Looking into the outer office, he saw Droom swaying before two women, rubbing his hands and smiling. One of the women carried a small babe in her arms. Neither she nor her companion seemed quite at ease in the presence of the lank guardian of the outer office.



## CHAPTER IV.

"ADY to see you," announced Droom. The shrewd, fearless genius of the inner room glanced up quickly and met the prolonged, uncanny gaze of his clerk. Unwillingly his eyes fell. "Confound it, Lias! Will you ever quit looking at me like that? There's something positively creepy in that stare of yours!" "Lady to see you," repeated the clerk, shifting about uneasily and then gliding away to take his customary look at the long row of books in the wall cases. He had performed this act a dozen times a day for more than five years. The habit had become so strong that chains could not have restrained him. It was what he considered a graceful way of dropping out of notice, at the same time giving the impression that he was constantly busy. "Are you Mr. Bansemmer?" asked the woman with the babe in her arms as he crossed into the outer office. For a moment Bansemmer purposely remained absorbed in the contemplation of his finger nails; then he shot a sudden, comprehensive glance which took in the young woman, her burden and all the supposed conditions. There was no doubt in his mind that here was another "paternity case," as he catalogued them in his big black book. "I am," he replied shortly, for he usually made short, quick work of such cases. There was not much money in them at best. "Would you mind coming in tomorrow? I'm just leaving for the day." "It will take but a few minutes, sir, and it would be very hard for me to get away again tomorrow," said the young woman nervously. "I'm a governess in a family way uptown, and my days are not very free."

(Continued Next Week.)  
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