Jane Cable

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CHAPTER XVII—(Continued)

He threw himself on his knees beside the bed and wept with all the pent up bitterness and misery that was in him—and still he was afraid to speak to her. Not a word left his lips until he felt her hand in his hair—a tender, timid hand. It was then that he began pouring forth his cry for forgiveness. With a groan he checked her own appeal for mercy.

"We can talk about Jane another time, not now," he cried. "I must

He threw himself on his knees beside the bed.

know that you forgive me. I don't care for anything—nothing else in the world."

When the nurse came in a few minutes later he was sitting upon the edge of the bed holding her hands in his. Their faces were radiant.

"Please stay out," he said, almost gruffly.

"For just a little while," his wife added gently. The nurse hesitated a moment and then left the room.

Frances Cable told him Jane's history so far as it was known to her. He listened dully.

"She will never know her true parents," said she in the end.

"No, I suppose not," said he, looking out of the window.

"You understand, don't you, David, dear?" she said feebly. "How I dreaded to have you learn the truth after all these years, and, above all, how I hoped that Jane might never know! I tried every means in my power to buy James Bansemer's silence." She buried her head shamefully in her arms. After a moment she went on: "He professes to love his son, but his is the love an animal gives the offspring it would destroy. And yet Graydon worships him."

"Are you quite sure that Graydon is as unsuspecting as you think?"

"In regard to his father?"

"In regard to Jane."

"Oh, I'm sure of it. He is not a party to his father's schemes. If James Bansemer has not already told Graydon, he never will. It is not his plan to do so. His only object has been to browbeat me into submission. David, it will all come out right in the end, won't it? You'll forgive me?"

"Yes, dear, but this man," and David Cable shook with emotion as he spoke, "will have to answer to me. There will be no more to fear," he said reassuringly. "I'll crush him as I would a snake."

"David, you must not"—

"Don't worry," he broke in. "I'll attend to him and see that no harm comes to any one else. That man has no business among honest people."

"But, David, I was not honest with you," she confessed.

"That was a long time ago, and she's as much mine as she is yours. So, what's the odds now? It's a facer, I'll admit, but it can't be helped." It was thus that the man whose anger only a few hours before had led him almost to crime now readily absolved her of any blame.

"Poor child, poor child!" she moaned. "It will break her heart. She is so proud and so happy."

"Yes, she's proud. There is good blood in her. I don't wonder now that I used to think she was such a martyr. She's—she's not just the same sort of stock that we are, take it as you will."

"She never must know the truth, David."

"She's bound to find it out, dear. We'd better tell her. It will be easier for her. Bansemer's fangs must be made harmless forever. He shan't bother her. She'd better hear the story from us and not from him."

"But Graydon? She'll lose him, David."

"I'm not so sure of it. She's worthy of any man's love, and we must know that Graydon loves her. I'll trust to that. But, first of all, we must put it beyond the power of James Bansemer to injure her in any shape or form. Then, when I go after him—Graydon or no Graydon—he'll know that there is such a place as hell."

"Be rational, David. Let us take our time and think well, dear. I can't bear the thought of the story that will go out concerning me—how I deceived you about Jane for years and years. What will people think of me! What will they say?" she almost wailed.

"Frances," said he, his voice tense and earnest, "that is between you and me. I intend to say to the world, if occasion demands, that I have known from the first that Jane was not our child. That will be"—

"Oh, David, you can't say that," she cried joyously.

"I shall say it, dear old partner. I shall say that you took her from the [illegible] There is only James Bansemer to call me a liar, and he will not dare!"

"That old man Droom, David—his clerk. The man who saved me—he knows."

"He is in the boat with his master. He did save you, though. I'll spare him much for that. And I have more to fear from him than you think, Frances. I am sure he saw me night before last down there at the sea wall. He knows, I am morally certain, that you were not attacked by a robber."

"But, David, I was robbed. My rings and my pendant were taken by some one. If Droom was the first man at my side—after you—then he must have taken them."

"I can't charge him with the theft," groaned Cable. "He saved your life and he might ruin mine. I would give anything I have to know just how much he saw of the affair. I can't account for his presence there. It seems like fate."

"It is impossible for him to accuse you, David."

"It is not impossible, I'm afraid. He may have seen me plainly."

"But I have described my assailant to the police. You do not answer the description in any particular."

In the next ten minutes the nurse came in twice to caution him against overtaxing her nerves, politely hinting that he should depart at once. There was no medicine, no nursing, no care that could have done her so much good as this hour with her husband.

"It hurt me more than I can tell you, David, when I saw that you were jealous of him. I could see it growing in you day after day, and yet I could not find the courage to make everything clear to you. Oh, how could you have suspected me of that?"

"Because I am a man and because I love you enough to care what becomes of you. I was wrong, I am happy to confess. Forgive me, dear. I can't tell you how terrible the last month has been to me. I can't tell you of the bitter thoughts I have had nor the vicious deeds I have planned. I was almost insane. I was not accountable. I have much to pay to you in the rest of the years that I live; I have much to pay to my own conscience, and I also owe something to James Bansemer. I shall try to pay all these different debts in the coin that they call for."

"We owe something, you and I, to Jane," said she as he arose to leave the room.

"A confession and more love than ever, Frances. I love her with all my heart. When you are stronger we will tell her that she is not our child. We have loved her so long and so well that she can't ask for better proof of our devotion. That terrible thing at the sea wall must remain our secret, dear. Tomorrow I shall begin pulling James Bansemer's fangs."

He found Graydon downstairs with Jane. A sharp look into the young man's eyes convinced him that his questions concerning Mrs. Cable and the latest news concerning the efforts to take the bandit were sincere. Cable held his hand for a long time; the firm, warm grasp was that of an honest man. As he stepped out into the night for a short walk over town he wondered, with a great pain in his heart, if Graydon Bansemer would turn from Jane when he heard the truth concerning her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"IT'S Harbert," said Elias Droom.

"Why didn't you say to him that I am busy? I don't want to see him," said his employer in a sharp undertone. Droom's long finger was on his lips, enjoining silence.

"He said that you wouldn't want to see him, but that it didn't make any difference. He'll wait, he says."

They were in the private office, with the door closed. Bansemer's face was whiter and more firmly set than ever. The ugly fighting light was in his eyes again.

"If he has come here to threaten me, I'll kill him," he said savagely.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said the clerk, with what was meant to be a conciliatory smile. "Meet him squarely and hear what he has to say."

"Do you suppose she has told Cable? He may have sent Harbert here."

"Cable's hands are tied. I know too much. If I were to tell the police what I know he'd have a devil of a time getting the presidency of his road. Besides, they both owe me a vote of thanks. Didn't I have sense enough to make it look like robbery?"

"Yes, but curse your stupidity, they may charge you with the job. Nobody would believe that Cable would attempt to rob his own wife."

"But they would in any event decide that he had taken the rings to make it appear like robbery." There was a hard rap on the glass panel. "He's bound to see you, sir."

"Well, then, show him in!" snarled Bansemer.

"Mr. Bansemer will see you, sir," said Droom suavely, opening the door suddenly.

"Thanks," said Harbert shortly. He entered the private office and faced the lawyer, who was standing near his desk. "I've taken advantage of your invitation to drop in and see you."

"This is one of my busy days, Mr. Harbert," said Bansemer, determined to come to the point at once. "However, I hardly expected a social call from you, so it must be of a business nature. What is it?"

"It concerns your son, Mr. Bansemer. I'm here in the capacity of a physician. You must go away for his health." Harbert smiled as though he thought it a good joke. Bansemer turned red and then white.

"I don't quite appreciate your wit, sir."

"My humor, I'd suggest as a substitute. Well, to be perfectly plain, sir, your son does not know the true nature of the malady. He"—

"Do I understand you to say that he really has an ailment?" exclaimed Bansemer seriously.

"It isn't hopeless, my dear sir. My only desire is to keep him from ever finding out that he has a malady. He is sure to learn the truth if you remain here."

"Harbert, I understand you now, and I want to say this to you: I'll not drag that boy away from this city. He's successful here, and he's one of the most promising young men in town. I'm not going to have him hounded from town to town by"—

"You don't quite understand me, sir. On the contrary, he should remain here. What I do mean to say is this: He won't feel like staying here if the truth about his father is uttered. That's the brutal way to put it, Bansemer, but you've got to get out."

The two glared at each other for a full minute. Bansemer was as white as a sheet, but not with fear.

"Harbert," he said in low tones, "I've half a mind to kill you."

"Don't. You'd hang for it. There are at least a dozen members of the bar who know that I have come here to see you, and they know why too. See here, Bansemer, you're a scoundrel to begin with. You've always been a knave. How you happen to have a son like Graydon I can't imagine. Bansemer, I believe that I drove you out of New York. You escaped without exposure simply because the witnesses lost their nerve. That won't be the case here. You think you've covered your tracks nicely. You haven't. You've tripped into half a dozen traps. I don't know what your game is with the Cables, but you're base enough to take advantage of your son's position in that home. Don't interrupt! I'll soon be through. I'm a man of few words. If it were not for your son I'd swear out the warrants for you today on five different charges. For his sake I'm going to give you a chance. I've worked on you for three years. I swore I'd get you some time. Well, I've got you, and I'm going to cheat myself out of a whole lot of pleasure. I'm not going to smash you as I intended. Your son's friends have prevailed.

"To show you that I am not bluffing, I have every bit of evidence in the Burkenday case, the Flossie Bellamy job, the Widow Hensmith affair—and it was a damnable one, too—with two or three more. You broke that woman's heart. I don't suppose you know that she died last month. You never noticed it, eh? Her precious coachman is living like a lord on the money you and he took from her. Old Burkenday's housemaid has bought a little home in Edgewater—but not from her wages. The two jobs you now have on hand never will be pulled off. The girl in the Banker Watts case has been cornered and has confessed. She is ready to appear against you. McLennan's wife has had the courage to defy your accomplice—that dastardly butler of theirs, and he has left town, frightened out of his wits. Your time has come. The jig is up. It won't be as it was in New York, because we have the proof. There is a committee of three down in Rigby's office now waiting for me to report. If I take word to them that you expect to sail for Europe next week, never to return to this country, all well and good. It is for your son's good health, bear in mind. If you go, the public may never learn the truth about you. If you stay, you will be in jail before you are a week older. And, Mr. Bansemer, you've got to decide quick."

Bansemer looked his accuser straight in the eye, a faint smile of derision touching his lips, but not his eyes.

"Mr. Harbert, the first thing you have to learn in connection with your patient's father is that he is not a coward. I refuse to run, sir. I am innocent of any intentional wrong, and I'll stand my ground. My son will stand beside me, too. He is that sort. Go back to your committee and tell them that Bansemer will not go to Europe for his son's health. Good day, sir!"

"Nonsense, Bansemer!" exploded Harbert. "You know we've got you fast enough. Why be a fool as well as a knave? You haven't a ghost of a chance. I'm trying to do you a good turn."

"A good turn? Mr. Harbert, I am neither a fool nor a knave. If I were a fool, I'd kill you where you stand. I would be justified in killing the man who represents a crowd of blackmailers. That's what you are, sir. I refuse to pay your price. If I were a knave, I'd pay it. I want you to understand one thing. I shall stand my ground here. If you persecute me I'll not stop playing you until death ends my endeavors. We'll see what justice can give me in exchange for your bulldozing. I will have restitution, remember that. Now, you've nothing more to say to me. Get out!"

"Sir!"

"Get out!"

"By George, you're a wonderful bluffer."

"Do you expect me to throw you out, sir?"

"It isn't necessary. I've had a change of heart in the last minute, Mr. Bansemer. I withdraw my proposition. By all that's holy, I intend to go after you now without pity. Hang your son's feelings! You won't take my advice. I didn't give it as a friend, because I detest you. It was done in a weak spirit of fairness toward your son and toward the girl he is to marry. Now, I put them out of my consideration. They"—

"Get out!"

Harbert, very red in the face, slammed the door after him and strode angrily through the outer office into the corridor. Droom immediately entered the consultation room.

"Well? What is it?" demanded Bansemer.

"What did he want?"

"He invited me to go to Europe for an indefinite stay. I refused. We'll fight it out, Droom. We have covered our trail better than he thinks. They can't convict me. I'm sure of that. They have nothing but conjectures, and they won't go in court."

"I'm afraid of him, just the same. You're bull headed about it. Every criminal thinks his tracks are covered until it is too late to cover them properly."

"Curse you, Droom; I'm no criminal."

"A slip of the tongue on my part. Do you know who is down there in Rigby's office with those fellows?"

"An officer, I dare say."

"No; David Cable."

"Cable? Then his wife has told him everything. Well, I've something to tell too. By the Lord Harry, Elias, there will be several sensations in high life."

"You don't mean that you'll tell all there is to tell about the girl?"

"No, that's just it! That is one thing I won't tell. If you tell whose blood she has in her veins, I'll kill you like a dog. But I'll see that Miss Cable is dropped by Chicago society inside of a week. I'm mad, Droom—do you understand?"

"But Graydon loves her."

"He won't love her long. I was a fool to let him go this far—a blind, loving fool. But I'll end it now. He shan't marry her. He has no"—

"I haven't much of a heart to boast of, Bansemer, but I beg of you not to do this thing. I love Graydon. He doesn't deserve any pain or disgrace. Take my advice and leave the city. Let me call Harbert back."

"No! They can't drive me out! Telephone over and ask Graydon to stop here on his way up this afternoon."

The opening and closing of the outer door attracted their attention. Droom peeped forth. In spite of himself, Bansemer started and his eyes widened with sudden alarm. A glance of apprehension passed between the two men.

"It's that Deever boy from Judge Smith's," reported Droom.

"Tell him to get out," said Bansemer, with a breath of relief.

"I thought it might have been"— began Droom with awry grin.

"Nonsense!"

"It is a bit too soon. They haven't had time."

As Droom left the room Bansemer crossed to the window and looked down into the seething street far below. He saw that his hand trembled and he tried to laugh at his weakness. For a long time he stood there, his unseeing eyes focused on the hurrying masses, his ears alert for unusual sounds from the outer office.

"If it were not for Graydon," he was muttering between set teeth. "God, how I hate to have him know!"

Droom had told Eddie Deever to "get out," but Eddie was there to talk and be talked to, so he failed to take the hint.

"Say, I haven't seen you since you played the hero up in the fashionable part of town. Gee, that was a startler! I'll bet old man Cable rewards you in some way. What's your theory about the holdup?"

Droom looked up sharply. For the first time there shot into his mind the thought that the breezy boy might be a spy.

"I haven't any," he replied shortly. He was trying to remember if he had ever said anything incriminating to the

"How'd you happen to be over there just at that time?"

"I haven't time to talk about it. Please don't bother me. It happened three days ago, and I've really forgotten about it. Don't throw that cigarette into the wastebasket. Haven't you any sense?"

"Gee! You don't suppose I'm going to throw it away, do you? There's half an inch of it left. Not me! Say, I've heard your boss has quite a case on Mrs. Cable. How about it?" He almost whispered this.

"You shouldn't talk like that."

"Oh, you mean that gag about people living in glass houses? Gee! Don't worry about that. Chicago is a city of glass houses. A blind man could throw rocks all day and smash a hole in somebody's house every crack. I believe the holdup man was one of those strikers who have been out of jobs all winter. Smith thinks so."

"Who?"

"Judge Smith."

"That's better."

"Did you see his face?"

"What are you, bub—a detective?"

"Rosie Keating says I'd make a better policeman than lawyer. She's sore at me for taking Miss Throckmorton to Mam' Gaill's the other night. Fellow stood on the piano and sang the cerndest song I've ever heard. But, gee! I don't think Miss Throck was on. She didn't seem to notice, I mean. Say, on the dead, do you think you could identify that fellow?"

"Look here, boy; if any one ever asks you whether I'd know that man's face if I saw it again you just say that I'd know it in a thousand. I saw it plainly."

Eddie gulped suddenly and looked more interested than ever.

"Do you think they'll get him?"

"They will if he talks too much."

"I hope so. Say, how's that new patent coming on?"

"I'm not making a patent. I'm making a model. It's nearly completed."

The outer door opened suddenly, and an old gentleman entered.

"Is Mr. Bansemer here?" he asked, removing his silk hat nervously.

"Yes, Mr. Watts. I'll tell him you are here."

Watts, the banker, confronted Bansemer a moment later, an anxious, hunted look in his eyes. John Watts was known as one of the meanest men in the city. No one had bested him in a transaction of any kind. As hard as nails and as treacherous as a dog, he was feared alike by man and woman.

Watts, perhaps for the first time in his self satisfied life, was ready to bow knee to a fellow man. A certain young woman had fallen into the skillful hands of Counselor James Bansemer, and Mr. Watts was jerked up with a firmness that staggered him.

"Mr. Bansemer, I have come in to see if this thing can't be settled between us. I don't want to go into court. My wife and daughters won't understand that it's a case of blackmail on the part of this woman. Let's come to terms."

Bansemer smiled coolly. It was impossible to resist the temptation to toy with him for awhile, to humble and humiliate this man who had destroyed hundreds in his juggernaut ride to riches. Skillfully he drew the old man out. He saw the beads of perspiration on his brow and heard the whine come from his voice. Then in the end he sharply changed his tactics.

"See here, Watts, you've got a wrong impression of this affair. I don't like your inferences. I am not asking you for a cent. I wouldn't take it. You have just offered me $25,000 to drop the affair. That's an insult to my integrity. I've investigated this girl's claim pretty thoroughly, and I believe she is trying to fleece you. I have given up the case. None of that sort of thing for me. She'll go to some unscrupulous lawyer, no doubt, but I am out of it. I don't handle that kind of business. You have insulted me. Get out of my office, sir, and never enter it again."

"Give me that in writing," began the wily banker, but Bansemer had called to Droom. Eddie Deever was standing near the door, almost doggedly curious.

"Show Mr. Watts the door, and if he ever comes here again call the police. He has tried to bribe me."

Watts departed in a dazed sort of way, and Droom closed the door.

"Are you still here?" he demanded of Eddie Deever in such a manner that the young man lost no time in leaving.

"There goes $25,000," said Bansemer, with a cold grin.

"I guess you can afford to lose it," muttered Droom. "It was slick, I suppose, but it's probably too late to help."

"Have you telephoned to Graydon?"

"Not yet."

"Don't."

"Change of heart?"

"Change of mind."

"That's so. You haven't any heart."

CHAPTER XIX.

BANSEMER was not losing his courage; it was only the dread of having Graydon find out. He stuck close to his office, seeing but few people. However, he did saunter into Rigby's office for a friendly chat, but learned nothing from the manner of that astute young man. With a boldness that astonished himself—and he was at no time timid—he asked if Harbert intended to remain in Chicago for any length of time. After he had gone away Rigby rubbed his forehead in a bewildered sort of way and marveled at the nerve of the man.

The day passed slowly, but late in the afternoon the suspense became so keen that he found it difficult to keep himself from making inquiries of the proper officials as to whether affidavits had been filed by Harbert or any other person. His hand did not shake now, but there was a steady pain at the back of his head.

"Droom, I think I'll go home. If I don't appear in the morning you'll know I'm at some police station. Good day!"

"Goodby!" said Elias, with correcting emphasis. Bansemer laughed heartily.

"I believe you'd like to see me jugged."

"Not unless you could be convicted. I'll have to remain in your employ until then, I suppose."

"I've often wondered why you don't quit of your own accord—it seems so distasteful to you."

"I'm working for you from force of habit."

"You'll turn state's evidence if I'm arrested, no doubt."

"If my word counted for anything," and he raised his hand, "I'd say, 'So help me—I shan't.'"

"I've never been able to understand you."

"I guess you've always understood my feelings toward you."

"You hate me?"

"I'm no exception to the rule."

"But hang you, you're faithful."

"Oh, I'll pay for it, never fear. You won't hesitate to sacrifice me if it will help you in any way. But let me tell you something. Elias Droom has been smart enough to cover every one of his tracks, even if he hasn't been able to cover yours. I can't perform miracles. You don't seem as keen to bring about the family explosion as you were, I observe."

"By heavens, I can't bear the thought of that boy—oh, well, close up the office as soon as you like."

After he was safely out of the office Elias Droom glided into the private office, drew forth his bunch of keys and opened his employer's desk. A big revolver lay in the top drawer. The old clerk quickly removed the five cartridges and as deftly substituted a new set of them in their stead. The

The old clerk quickly removed the five cartridges.

new ones were minus the explosive power. He grinned as he replaced the weapon and closed the desk. Dropping the cartridges into his coat pocket, he returned to his own desk, chuckling as he set to work on his papers.

"I won't betray him to the law, but I've fixed it so that he can't escape it in that way."

Bansemer's man informed him upon his arrival home that Mr. Graydon would not be in for dinner. He had left word that Mrs. Cable was very much improved and that he and Miss Cable were going out for a long drive—in a hansom. It was his intention to dine with Mr. and Miss Cable very informally.

Bansemer sat in surly silence for a long time trying to read. A fierce new jealousy was growing in his heart. It was gradually dawning upon him that the Cables had alienated his son's affections to no small degree. The fear grew upon him that Graydon ultimately would go over to them, forgetting his father in the love for the girl. Resentment, strong and savage, flooded his heart. He could eat no dinner. He was full of curses for the fate which forced him to dine alone while his son was off rejoicing with people whom he was beginning to hate with a fervor that pained him. Jealousy, envy, malice, fired his blood.

He went out and bought the evening papers. The thought came to him that Graydon had heard the stories and was deliberately staying away from him. Perhaps the Cables had been talking to him.

"By heaven," he grated as he paused in front of his home, "if she's turned him against me I'll turn this city into anything but a paradise for her. What a fool I've been to wait so long! I've given her the chance to tell her side of the case first. She's made the first impression. What could I have been thinking of? Droom was right. I should have demanded less of her. A man is never too old to be a fool about women. Oh, if she's turned that boy against me I'll"—

He did not finish the threat, but started off swiftly through the night toward the Cable home. He had no especial object in view; it was simply impossible for him to conquer the impulse to be near his son. Like a thief he lurked about the street in the vicinity of Cable's house, standing in the shadows, crossing and recrossing the street many times, always watching the lighted windows with hateful eyes. It was after 8 o'clock, and the night was damp with the first breath of spring. There was a slight chill in the air, but he did not feel it, although he was without an overcoat.

The lights on the second floor, he knew, were in Mrs. Cable's room. In his mind's eye he could see Graydon there with the others listening to the story as it fell from prejudiced, condemning lips—the pathetic, persuasive lips of a sick woman. He knew the effect on the chivalrous nature of his son; he could feel the coldness that took root in his boy's heart.

A light mist began to blow in his face as he paced back and forth along the short block in which the Cables lived. He was working his imagination up to a state bordering on frenzy. In his fancy he could hear Graydon cursing him in the presence of his accusers. At the end of the street he could see the break in the sea wall where Cable and his wife had met, and he could not help wishing that Droom had not pulled her from the water. Then he found himself wondering if they had told Jane the story of her origin. The hope that she was still undeceived flashed through him; it would give him a chance for sweet revenge.

He confessed to himself that he was reckless. The transactions of the past few days had left him at the edge of the abyss. He recognized his peril, but could not see beyond his own impulses.

"I believe I'll do it," he was muttering to himself as he paused across the street from their door. "Graydon ought to hear both sides of the story."

He crossed the street with hesitating steps. His thin coat collar was buttoned close about his neck; his gloveless hands were wet and cold from the mist. As he stepped at the foot of the stone steps a man came hurrying along, glancing at the house numbers as he approached.

"Do you know whether this is David Cable's house?" he asked.

Bansemer saw that he was a young man and an eager one.

"I think it is."

The other bounded up the steps and rang the bell. When the servant opened the door Bansemer heard the new arrival ask for Cable, adding that he was from one of the newspapers and that he must see him at once.

Bansemer stood stark and dumb at the foot of the steps. The whole situation had rushed upon him like an avalanche. Harbert had filed his charges, and the hasty visit of the reporter proved that David Cable was an instrument in them. The blood surged to his head. He staggered under the shock of increased rage.

"Graydon is against me! They've won him over! Open the door! I want my son!" He shouted the demand in the face of the startled servant as he pushed rudely past him.

"You stay here, young fellow, and you'll hear a story that will fill a whole paper. I am James Bansemer. Where is Cable? You!" to the servant.

"Sh!" cried the frightened servant, recognizing him. "Mrs. Cable is resting, sir."

"What are you doing here?" Bansemer demanded of the reporter, exerting all his crafty resourcefulness in the effort to calm himself.

"Cable has been elected president of the"— began the young man just as Cable himself started down the stairway.

"Cable, where is my son?" demanded Bansemer loudly, starting toward the steps. He had not removed his hat and was indeed an ominous figure. Cable clutched the stair rail and glared down at him in amazement. Before he could pull himself together sufficiently to reply Graydon Bansemer hurried past him and started in alarm at the unexpected figure below.

"What's the matter, dad?" he cried. "What has happened?"

"Ah! You think something could have happened, eh? You shan't be taken in by them. Come down here, boy!"

"Father, are you crazy?" gasped Graydon, rushing down the stairs.

"Get him away from here, Graydon, for God's sake," exclaimed Cable. "Take him away! He's your father, but if he stays in this house a minute longer I'll kill him!"

The man from the newspaper was shrewd enough to withdraw into a less exposed spot. He saw a great "beat" in prospect.

Graydon stopped as if stunned by a blow. Bobby Rigby came running to the head of the stairs, followed by Jane and another young woman. James Bansemer could not have been expected to know it, but Rigby and Miss Clegg had come to tell these friends that they were to be married in December.

"Kill me, eh? Not if you can't do a better job than you did the other night. Here, you reporter, ask Mr. Cable to explain the mystery of that affair on the lake front. Oh, I know all about it! You've started in to ruin me, but I'll be in on it myself. We'll have a general cleaning up."

"Father! What are you talking about?" cried Graydon, aghast.

"They haven't told you about the lake front, eh? I should think not. See him cringe!"

Cable had indeed fallen back against the wall, halfway up the steps, white and trembling. His eyes were raised, and he was the first to see Mrs. Cable as she came from her room.

"Go back!" he whispered hoarsely to her. She reached the banister and leaned over, her eyes filling with terror after a swift glance at Jane.

"Take Jane away," she murmured, realizing that the blow was to fall.

(Continued next week.)

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