# Jane Cable

... By ...

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Author of "Beverly of Graustark," Etc.

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CHAPTER XXVIII—(Continued.)

"Something loose about your testimony, I believe, wasn't there?"

"Oh, the whole thing doesn't amount to a whoop. I'm trying to get Eddie another job. She oughtn't to write in there with that guy."

"Well, you're twenty-one. Why don't you open an office of your own? Your mother's got plenty of money. She can buy you a library and a sign, and that is all a young lawyer needs in Chicago."

"Mother wants me to run for alderman in our ward next spring. I'll be able to vote at that election."

"You've got as much right in the council as some others, I suppose."

"Sure. Mother owns property. The west side ought to be as well represented as the north side. Property interests is what we need in the council. That's"—

"I don't care to hear a political speech, Jor. Are you busy this afternoon?"

"No. I wouldn't be here if I was."

"Then get up there and hand those books down to me. Nobody looks in this office today."

"Well, doggone, if that isn't the limit! All right. Don't get mad. I'll do it." The young gentleman leisurely ascended to the top of the stepladder and fell into the reader the lush.

"Young Mr. Graydon Bansemer will be here this afternoon," said Droom. "I want to get things cleaned up a bit beforehand."

"How does he feel about his father?"

"He doesn't know about him, I'm afraid."

"Gee! Well, it'll jar him a bit, won't it?"

The office door was opened suddenly and a tall young man strode into the room, only to stop aghast at the sight before him. Droom's left finger crooked meekly and his eyes waved.

"What's all this?" cried Graydon, dropping his bag and coming toward the old man, his hand outstretched. Droom's clammy fingers rested limply in the warm clasp.

"How are you, Graydon? I'm—I'm very glad to see you. You are looking well. Oh, this? We—we are moving," said the old man. The helpers looked on with interest. "Come into the back office. It isn't so torn up. I didn't expect you so soon. They said it was twenty-four hours late. Well, well, how are you, my boy?"

"I'm quite well again, Elias. Hard slogs of it, I tell you. Moving, eh? What's that for?"

"Never mind those books, Eddie. Thank you for helping me. Come in some other time. You fellows—I mean you—pack the rest of these, and then I'll tell you what to do next. Come in, Graydon."

Eddie Deever took his departure, deeply insulted because he had not been introduced to the newcomer. Graydon, somewhat bewildered, followed Droom into his father's consultation room. He looked around inquiringly.

"Where is father? I telegraphed to him."

An incomprehensible grin came into Droom's face. He twirled the umbrella in his fingers a moment before replying. His glance at the closed door was no more significant than his lowered tones.

"It didn't go very well with him, Graydon. He isn't here any more."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean the trial. There was a trial, you see. Haven't you heard anything?"

"Trial? He—he was arrested?" came numbly from the young man's lips.

"I can't mince matters, Graydon. I'll get it over as quickly as possible. Your father was tried for blackmail and was convicted. He is in—he's in the penitentiary."

The son's face became absolutely bloodless. His eyes were full of comprehension and horror, and his body stiffened as if he were turning to stone. The word penitentiary fell slowly, mechanically, from his lips. He looked into Droom's eyes, hoping it might be a joke of the calloused old clerk.

"You—it—it can't be true," he murmured, his trembling hands going to his temples.

"Yes, my boy, it is true. I didn't write to you about it because I wanted to put it off as long as I could. It's for five years."

"God!" burst from the wretched son. A wave of shame and grief sent the tears flooding to his eyes. "Poor old dad!" He turned and walked to the window, his shoulders heaving. Droom stood silent for a long time, watching Bansemer's son, pity and triumph in his face.

"Do you want to hear about it?" he asked at last. Graydon's head was bent in assent.

"It came the day after you left Chicago with the recruits. I knew you would not read the newspapers. So did he. Harbert swore out the papers, and he was arrested here in this office. I believe he would have killed himself if he had been given time. His revolver was—er—not loaded. Before the officers came he discharged me. I was at liberty to go or to testify against him. I did neither. Of course I was arrested, but they could only prove that I was a clerk who knew absolutely nothing about the inside workings of the office. I offered to go as his bond, but he would not have me. He made some arrangement through his attorney, and bail was secured. In spite of the fact that he was charged with crime he insisted on keeping these offices and trying to do business. It wasn't because he needed money, Graydon, but because he wanted to lead an honest life, he said. He has a great deal of money, let me tell you. The grand jury indicted him last spring, but the trial did not come up until last month, nearly a year later, so swift is justice in this city. In the meantime I saw but little of him. I was working on an invention, and, besides, there were detectives watching every movement I made. I stuck close to my rooms. By the way,

*"God!" burst from the wretched son.*

I want to show you a couple of models I have perfected. Don't let me forget it. They"—

"Yes, yes—but father? Go on."

"Well, the trial came up at last. That man Harbert is a devil. He had twenty witnesses, any one of whom could have convicted your father. How he got on to them I cannot imagine. He uncovered every deal we've—er—he had in Chicago and"—

"Then he really was guilty?" groaned Graydon.

"Yes, my boy. I knew it, of course. They could not force me to testify against him, however. I was too smart for them. Well, to make it short, he was sentenced five weeks ago. The motion for a new trial was overruled. He went to Joliet. If he had been a popular alderman or ward boss he would have been out yet on continuances, spending most of his sentence in some fashionable hotel, to say the least."

"For five years!" The young man sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands.

"There'll be something off for good behavior, my boy. He wanted to behave well before he went there, so I suppose he'll keep it up. The whole town was against him. He didn't have a friend."

"How did you escape," demanded Graydon, looking up suddenly—"state's evidence?"

"No; not even after he tried to put most of the blame upon me. He tried that, my boy. I just let him talk. It saved me from prison—usually the case with the man who keeps his mouth closed."

"But, Elias—Elias, why have I been kept in the dark? Why did he not tell me about it? Why has"—

"You forget, Graydon, that you turned from him first. You were really the first to condemn him. He wanted you to stay away from this country until he is free. That was his plan. He didn't want to see you. Now he wants you to come to him. He wants you to bring Jane Cable to see him."

"What!"

"Yes, that's it. I believe he intends to tell her the names of her father and mother. I think he wants her to forgive him, and he wants to hear both of you say it to him."

Graydon stared blankly from the window. The old clerk was smiling to himself, an evil, gloating smile that would have shocked Bansemer had he turned suddenly.

"He wants both of us to—to come to the penitentiary?" muttered the son.

"Yes, as soon as possible. Do you think she'll go?" demanded Droom anxiously.

"I don't know. I'm afraid not."

"Not even to learn who her parents are?"

"It might tempt her. But she hates father."

"Well, she can ghost over him, can't she? That ought to be some satisfaction. Talk it over with her. She's here, isn't she?"

"Elias, do you know who her parents were?" asked Graydon quickly. "I've thought you knew as much about it as father."

The old man's eyes shifted.

"It's a silly question to ask me. I was not a member of the Four Hundred, my boy."

"Nor was my father. Yet you think he knows."

"He's a much smarter man than I, Graydon. You'll go with me to see him?"

"Yes. I can't speak for Miss Cable."

"See her tomorrow. Come out to my place tonight, where the reporters can't find you. Maybe you won't care to sleep with me—I've but one bed, you see—but you can go to a quiet hotel downtown. I'm packing these things to store them for your father. Then I'm going back to New York to live on my income. It's honest money too."

"Who sent me the draft for five hundred?"

"I did, Graydon. Forgive me. It was just a loan, you know. I thought you'd need something"—

"I haven't touched it, Elias. Here it is. Thank you. No, I won't accept it." "Sorry," muttered the old man, taking the slip of paper.

Graydon resumed his seat near the window and watched Droom with leaden eyes as he fussed suddenly to resume charge of the packing. "We'll soon be through," he said shortly.

For an hour the work went on, and then Droom dismissed the workers with their pay. The storage van men were there to carry the boxes away. Graydon sat still and saw the offices divested. Secondhand dealers hurried off with the furniture, the pictures and the rugs. An expressman came in for the things that belonged to Elias Droom.

"There," said the clerk, tossing the umbrella into a corner, "it's finished. There's nothing left to do but remove ourselves."

"Elias, did Mr. Clegg know about father's conviction when he offered me the place in New York?" asked Graydon as they started away.

"Yes; that's the beauty of it. He admires you. You'll take the place?"

"Not until I've talked it all over with him tomorrow."

Droom called a cab, and the two drove over to the Wells street rooms. Graydon relinquishing himself completely to the will of the old man. During the supper, which Droom prepared with elaborate care, and far into the night the young man sat and listened without interest to the garrulous talk of his host, who explained the mechanism and purpose of two models.

One was in the nature of a guillotine by which a person could chop his own head off neatly without chance of failure, and the other had to do with the improvement of science in respect to shoelaces.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. CLEGG was not long in convincing Graydon that his proposition to him was sincere and not the outgrowth of sentiment. A dozen men in the office greeted Graydon with a warmth that had an uplifting effect. He went away with a heart lighter than he had once imagined it could ever be again. In two weeks he was to be in absolute control of the New York branch. He assured the firm that his physical condition was such that he could go to work at once if necessary.

As he hastened to the Annex misgivings again entered into his soul. The newspapers had heralded his return and had hinted broadly at romantic developments in connection with Miss Cable, "who is at the Annex with Mr. and Mrs. Cable." There were brief references to the causes which sent both of them to the Philippines, and that was all.

Without hesitation he came to the point by asking if she knew what had befallen his father. Jane had heard the news the night before. He thereupon put the whole situation before her just as it had been suggested in Droom's ironical remark. It was not until after the question had been passed upon by Mr. and Mrs. Cable that she reluctantly consented to visit Graydon's father solely for the purpose of gleaning what information she could regarding her parentage.

They left the next day with Elias Droom, depressed, nervous, dreading the hour ahead of them. Neither was in the mood to respond to the eager, excited remarks of the old clerk. The short railroad trip was one never to be forgotten; impressions were left in their lives that could not be effaced.

James Bansemer, shorn and striped, was not expecting visitors. He was surprised and angry when he was told that visitors were waiting to see him. For four weeks he had labored clumsily and sourly in the shoe factory of the great prison, a hauler and carrier. His tall figure was bent with unusual toil, his hands were sore and his heart was full of the canker of rebellion. Already in that short time his face had taken on the look of the convict. All the viciousness in his nature had gone to his face and settled there. He had the sullen, dogged, patient look of the man who has a number, but no name.

The once dignified, aggressive walk had degenerated into a slouch. He shuffled as he came to the bars where he was to meet his first visitors. He was not pleased, but he was curious. Down in his heart he found a hope that his attorney had come with good news. It was not until he was almost face to face with his son that he realized who it was, not until then that he felt the full force of shame, degradation, loathing for himself.

He started back with an involuntary oath and would have slunk away had not Graydon called out to him—called out in a voice full of pain and misery. The convict's face was ashen and his jaw hung loose with the paralysis of dismay. His heart dropped like a chunk of ice; his feet were as leaden weights. A look of utter despair came into his hard eyes as he slowly advanced to the bars.

"My God, Graydon, why did you come? Why did you come here?" he muttered. Then he caught sight of Jane and Elias Droom. His eyes dropped, and his fingers twitched. To save his life he could not have kept his lower lip from trembling nor the burning tears from his eyes. His humiliation was complete.

A malevolent grin was on Droom's face. His staring blue eyes looked with a great joy upon the shamed, beaten man in the stripes. The one thing that he had longed for and cherished had come to pass. He had lived to see James Bansemer utterly destroyed even in his own eyes.

"Father, I can't believe it. I can't tell you how it hurts me. I would willingly take you, place if it were possible. Forgive me for deserting you," Graydon was saying incoherently when his father lifted his face suddenly, a fierce, horrified look of understanding in the eyes that flashed upon Elias Droom. Even as he clasped his son's hand in the bitterness of small joy his lips curled into a snarl of fury. Droom's eyes shifted instantly, his uneasy gaze directing itself, as usual, above the head of its victim.

"You did this, curse you!" came from the convict's livid lips. "And this girl too! Good God, you knew I would rather have died than to meet Graydon as I am now. You knew it, and you brought him here. I hope you will rot for this, Elias Droom. She comes here, too, to gloat, to rejoice, to see how I look before my son in prison stripes!" He went on violently for a long stretch, ending with a sob of rage. "I suppose you are satisfied," he said hoarsely to Droom.

Graydon and Jane looked on in surprise and distress. Droom's gaze did not swerve nor his expression change.

"Father, didn't you expect me to come?" asked Graydon. "Don't you want to see me?"

"Not here. Why should I have tried to keep you from returning to this country? God knows how I hoped and prayed that you'd not see me here, Elias Droom knew it. That's why he brought you here. Don't lie to me, Droom. I know it!"

"What could you expect?" mumbled Droom. "Down in your heart you wanted to see him. I've done you a kindness."

"For which I'll repay you some day," cried the prisoner, a steady look in his eyes. "Now go away, all of you! I'm through with you. You've seen me. The girl is satisfied. Go"—

"Nonsense, father," cried Graydon, visibly distressed by his father's anguish. "Elias said that you wanted to see us. Jane did not come out of curiosity. She is here to ask justice of you. She's not seeking vengeance."

"I'll talk to you alone," said the prisoner shortly. "Send her away. I've nothing to say to her or Droom."

Jane turned and walked swiftly away, followed by Droom, who rubbed his long fingers together and tried to look sympathetic. The interview that ensued between father and son was never to be forgotten by either. Graydon heard his father's bitter story in awed silence; heard him curse deeply and vindictively; heard all this and marveled at the new and heretofore unexposed side of his nature.

There was something pathetic in the haggard face and the expressions of impotent rage. His heart softened when his father bared his shame to him and cried out against the fate which had brought them together on this day.

"It doesn't matter, father," said Graydon hoarsely. "I deserted you,

*"You did this, curse you!" came from the convict's livid lips.*

and I'm sorry. No matter what you've done to bring you here, I'm glad I've come to see you. I don't blame Elias. For awhile I'm afraid I rather held out against coming. Now I am glad for my own sake. I won't desert you now. I am going to work for a pardon if your appeal does not go through."

"Don't—I won't have it!" exclaimed the other. "I'm going to stay it out. It will give me time to forget, so that I can be a better man. If they let me out now I'd do something I'd always regret. I want to serve my time and start all over again. Don't worry about me. I won't hamper you. I'll go away—abroad, as Harbert suggested. His advice was good, after all. Understand, Graydon, I do not want parole or pardon. You must not undertake it. I am guilty and ought to be punished the same as these other fellows in here. Don't shudder. It's true. I'm no better than they."

"I hate to think of you in this awful place," began Graydon.

"Don't think of me."

"But I've seen you here, father!" cried the son.

"A pretty spectacle for a son," laughed the father bitterly. "Why did you bring that girl here? That was cruel—heartless."

Graydon tried to convince him that Jane had not come to gloat, but to ask a favor of him.

"A favor, eh? She expects me to tell all I know about her, eh? That's good!" laughed Bansemer.

"Father, she has done you no wrong. Why are you so bitter against her? It's not right. It's not like you."

Bansemer looked steadily at him for a full minute.

"Is she going to marry you, Graydon?"

"She refuses absolutely."

"Then she's better than I thought. Perhaps I'm wrong in hating her as I do. It's because she took you away from me. Give me time, Graydon. Some day I may tell you all I know. Don't urge me now. I can't do it now. I don't want to see her again. Don't think I'm a fool about it, boy, and don't speak of it again. Give me time."

"She is the gentlest woman in the world."

"You love her?"

"Better than my life."

"Graydon, I—I hope she will change her mind and become your wife."

"You do? I don't understand."

"That's why I'd rather she never could know who her parents are. The shadow is invisible now. It wouldn't help matters for her if it were visible. She's better off by not knowing. Has Droom fathomed that secret?"

"He says he does not."

"He lies, but at the same time he won't tell her. It's not to him to do it. He has served me ill today. He has always hated me, but he was always true to me. He did me a vile trick when he changed the cartridges in my revolver. I discharged him for that. I told him to appear against me if he would. He was free to do so; but curse him, he would not give me the satisfaction of knowing that he was a traitor. He knew I'd go over the road anyhow. He's been waiting for this day to come. He has finally given me the unhappiest hour in my life."

After a few moments he quieted down and asked Graydon what his plans were for the future. In a strained, uncertain way the two talked of the young man's prospects and the advantages they promised.

"Go ahead, Graydon, and don't let the shadow of your father haunt you. Don't forget me, boy, because I love you better than all the world. These are strange words for a man who has fallen as I have fallen, but they are true. Listen to this: You will be a rich man some day. I have a fortune to give you, my boy. They can't take my money from me, you know. It's all to be yours, every cent of it. You see"—

"Father—I—let us not talk about it now," said Graydon hastily, a shadow of repugnance in his eyes. Bansemer studied his face for a moment, and a deep red mounted to his brow.

"You mean, Graydon," he stammered, "that you—you do not want my money?"

"Why should we talk about it now?"

"Because it suggests my death?"

"No, no, father. I"—

"You need not say it. I understand. It's enough. You feel that my money was not honestly made. Well, we won't discuss it. I'll not offer it to you again."

"It won't make any difference, dad. I love you. I don't love your money."

"Or the way I earned it. Some day, my boy, you'll learn that very few make money by dealing squarely with their fellow men. It's not the custom. My methods were a little broader than common, that's all. I now notify you that I intend to leave all I have to sweet charity. I earned most of my ill gotten wealth in New York and Chicago, and I'm going to give it back to these cities. Charity will take anything that is offered, but it doesn't always give in return."

At the expiration of the time allotted to the visitor Graydon took his departure.

"Graydon, ask her to think kindly of me if she can."

"I'll come down again, father, before I go east."

"No!" almost shouted James Bansemer. "I won't have it! For my sake, Graydon, don't ever come here again. Don't shame me more than you have today. I'll never forget this hour. Stay away and you'll be doing me the greatest kindness in the world. Promise me, boy!"

"I can't promise that, dad. It isn't a sane request. I am your son"—

"My God, boy, don't you see that I can't bear to look at you through these bars? Go! Please go! Goodby! Write to me, but don't come here again. Don't! It's only a few years."

He turned away abruptly, his shoulder drawn upward as if in pain, and Graydon left the place, weakened and sick at heart.

Jane and Droom were awaiting him in an outer office. The former looked into his eyes searchingly, tenderly.

"I'm so sorry, Graydon," she said as she took his hand in hers.

All the way back to Chicago Elias Droom sat and watched them from under lowered brows, wondering why it was that he felt so much lonelier than he ever had felt before—wondering, too, in a vague sort of way why he was not able to exult after all.

(Continued next week.)

Mrs. Minnie Croner and daughter, Gladys, have gone to California in hopes of benefiting the latter's health.


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