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# Jane Cable

... By ... GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON, Author of "Beverly of Graustark," Etc.

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CHAPTER XII—(Continued.)

Suddenly he stopped stockstill, the bitter scowl deepening in his eyes. With an oath he turned abruptly and hurried in the opposite direction. The time had come to make ready for battle. A few minutes later, he was writing the note which created so much commotion in the home of Elias Droom.



"Humph! I know every street in town, streets in town—Wells and South Water."

"Humph! I know every street in town," Droom roared, drawing himself up in his chair, and then blandly, "What's happened?"

"Not so loud! Harbert's here, but—"

"Oho! Here?"

"In Chicago, yes—we'll talk about it later."

CHAPTER XIII.

It was not until the hurrying Bausemer entered the door of Hector's that the apprehension of having committed a senseless blunder came to him.

"Good heavens!" he muttered, stopping short. "What a fool I'm getting to be—meeting old Elias, in a place like this! The theater crowds—everybody in town will be here by 11! Curse me, for a hopeless ass! I must get him away at once!"

Grumbling at himself, he passed into the restaurant. Gabe offered him the choice of various tables. He selected one which commanded a view of the entrances and ordered a perfunctory "Scotch." Nervous and anxious, he was more troubled than he cared to admit even to himself. Fortunately there were not many people in the cafe, and his gaze wandering about the place soon halted before the small alcove in the east end containing a table with wine glasses, in waiting, set for a large party. The clock, back of the cigar stand, said it was five minutes after 11.

Bausemer impatiently watched the two doors leading to the street and was beginning to wonder whether the message had reached the old clerk when presently the uncouth shape of Droom appeared, slinking through the so-called ladies' entrance with the striking attitude of one unaccustomed to fashionable restaurants and doubtful of his reception. Bausemer motioned to him.

"Just as soon as I can get my check," he was saying, at the same time beckoning to a waiter, "we'll move out of this. It will be crowded in—I never thought, a stall at Chapin & Gore's will be better. Here, waiter, my check! I'm in a hurry! The devil!"

As the exclamation burst from his lips there came down the narrow steps and through a door quickly thrown open by a waiter a number of gay, fashionably dressed people, all smiling and trembling with the cold. Immediately this party attracted the attention of the room, Walters rushed hither and thither relieving the ladies of their costly lace and fur wraps and the men of their heavy overcoats. Of the expected theater comers these were the first to arrive, but presently others followed, and soon the quiet cafe of the early evening became transformed into one of bustle and excitement by the eager, animated throng. With dismay Bausemer noticed that those to whom his attention had been attracted were blocking his way to the doors. Escape was out of the question. Reluctantly he returned to his seat and ordered the clerk to take the one opposite him. Then scanning the party making its passage to the alcove he perceived three or four men whom he knew and presently, to his surprise and consternation, his son. The recognition was mutual, Graydon making his way around a small table in order to affectionately greet him. As he approached his eyes fastened themselves on his father's companion. With amazement he recognized the queer figure of the lady, gauding Droom; but, too kind hearted and well bred to show his features in the slightest degree to express the astonishment which he felt at sight of such a comic lioness, the young man veiled a few kindly words to the old man, while

from the table in the alcove where the smart little supper party were waiting themselves Miss Cable was smiling her cheery recognition to her prospective father-in-law, then Graydon made his way back to his seat by her side.

"Why did you come here?" asked Droom, frowning somewhat at the unexpected sight of his son. "Because I thought I thought you would be here, and you didn't!" replied Bausemer indignantly.

The unexpected arrival of his son and party had disturbed his usual equanimity. He felt with his usual superior's complacency returned, and he would not be spoken to. "I supposed you knew only the



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correct phrase," said Billy, after having refreshed himself with sufficient champagne to proceed, "were two retired merchants, a venerable logician, a doddering banker and a half blind college professor. Of course I had to make some excuse for Mrs. Fernmore's absence. For the life of me I cannot now remember what yarn I told them, but they were too anxious to be presented to the gay young women not to swallow it whole. The old boys fairly swamped the girls with their senile attentions. It was a lively supper party—my word! And they went home unanimously declaring that the debutantes of the present day discounted, at least in dash and go, the charmers of fifty years ago."

Amidst the confusion of peals of merriment which greeted the genial raconteur, Miss Cable, to whom the story did not especially appeal, whispered in awed tones:

"Graydon, who on earth is that queer, spectacular looking man with your father?"

"Oh, that's Droom—can't be a character? He's been with the governor since I was a child. In those days his looks used to frighten me almost to death. I fancy he's had a sad life, don't you know?"

"There is something positively awful in his face," returned the girl, as her eyes faltered and dropped to her plate on an unexpectedly meeting those of the subject of her remark.

"Sh—!" came from Medford, and then, "Come, Billy—what's the point—or the moral, as they say in novels?"

"Fernmore is a rattling good chap at heart," Graydon was saying to Jane, "but I can't stand that Med—"

"Yes, yes; go on, Mr. Fernmore," broke in several voices in eager expectancy.

"The moral?" Billy's eyes were twinkling. "The joke, rather, is on me. When Mrs. Fernmore reached home I thought it wise to say nothing about the affair, but I had completely underestimated the persistency of these rejuvenated venerables. They were not satisfied—wanted to know more about the girls, and the next day in deep but joyous simplicity half a dozen old men asked their married daughters and close friends at the clubs what family of Brown a certain debutante belonged to, who was the father of Miss Jones and how long had the family of Miss Robinson lived in the city, together with a lot of amazing questions. And failing to derive even the remotest satisfaction from the social register, the woman members of their families besieged my innocent wife with more or less shocked inquiries as to an entertainment of mine at which their aged relations were present. Well, the game was up! I owned up—confessed to the girls being actresses and begged for mercy."

"And I forgave him," supplemented Mrs. Fernmore smilingly. "Boys will be boys."

"Whew!" whistled Billy, in conclusion. "It was no end of a lark! I would not have missed it for the world; but the old chaps will never, never forgive me."

As the gentleman finished, Bausemer was looking at Droom with amusement. The old clerk was shaking his head in a manner that signified disapproval.

"How's that for doling in swagger society, eh, Droom? If any one but Billy Fernmore had done that he would have been ostracized forever. Nothing like millions!"

"I don't believe true aristocrats would do that," interrupted Droom half angrily.

"These are the aristocrats—money aristocrats; the others have lost the name—forgotten. Come, let's go over yonder. We can talk there."

Bausemer called for the bill and settled it; then, slowly rising, ostentatiously waved his adieu to the alcove and deserted the scene for Chapin & Gore's. Droom meekly followed his employer.

For some time neither spoke. In their stall each was busy with his own thoughts and speculations.

"I think I've made a mess of it with Mrs. Cable," began Bausemer. "She—"

"I wouldn't mention names," cautioned Droom, with a look at the top of the partition.

"She's very likely to fight back, after all."

"What was your demand?" "Money," said Bausemer quietly.

"Humph!" was Droom's way of saying he had.

"Harbert has a purpose in coming here, Elias. We must prepare for him."

"We are as well prepared as we can expect to be. I guess it means that we'll have to get out of Chicago."

"Dread him!" snarled Bausemer. "I don't care a rap about myself, but it will be all up with Graydon if anything—or—supplement should happen to me," said Bausemer, with a wistful glance at his glass. Then in wistful tones he told of the meeting with Harbert. Droom agreed that the situation looked unpleasant, and all the while in view of what Elias Droom had mentioned in connection with the marriage office. He repeated the story as it had come from the budding youngster's lips, utterly deceived by the guileless emissary from the office downstairs.

"What do you expect to do?" he asked, studying the tense face of his employer.

"Continued Next Friday"

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