Jane Cable

... By ...

GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON,

Author of "Beverly of Graustark," Etc.

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CHAPTER XV—(Continued.)

"Do you hear me? I have lied to my husband for the last time!" There was almost a tone of victory in the voice now. "Do you hear me? You don't dare! David will not believe you. He will believe my"—

A terrible oath choked back the hopeful words in the woman's throat. Murder had come back into the man's heart.

"You lie!"

"David!"

"Yes, it's David! Liar! Whose child is she? Tell me?"

"David! David! For God's sake, hear me! There was no wrong, I swear it!"

"She's not my child and there's no wrong!" The sardonic laugh that followed was that of a raging maniac. "You've fooled me, you fiend! You devil!"

At that word and with one look at her husband's terribly distorted features, Frances Cable shrank back with a single terrified cry, turned from him and fled madly for her life. With the spring of the wild beast, Cable rushed

With the spring of the wild beast, Cable rushed after her.

after her, cursing her with every breath. In a few yards he had almost reached her, his hands outstretched to grasp her neck. But at that instant the frightened woman's strength suddenly gave way. Her knees received the fall of the limp body. For a second she seemed huddled in a posture of prayer, then toppled over, slipped easily forward through a fissure in the wall and plunged headforemost into the chugging waters below.

In the lives even of the best men there are moments when the human instincts are annihilated and supplanted

water between the sturdy posts and into the cut of the wall.

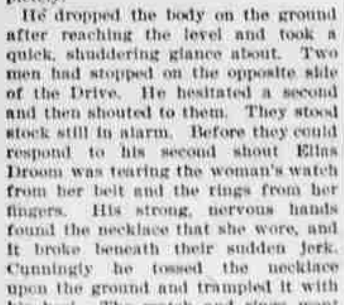
Without a moment's hesitation he dropped into this seething prison, confident that the woman's body could be found there. A single glance had shown him that he could crawl upward through the break to safety, and he knew that the water below was not dangerously deep.

A minute later he was scrambling out of this angry, icy water up through the fissure, bearing in his long arms the inert form of Frances Cable. He had found her half submerged in the pool, every sweep of the waves through the sievelike posts covering her completely.

He dropped the body on the ground after reaching the level and took a quick, shuddering glance about. Two men had stopped on the opposite side of the Drive. He hesitated a second and then shouted to them. They stood stock still in alarm. Before they could respond to his second shout Elias Droom was tearing the woman's watch from her belt and the rings from her fingers. His strong, nervous hands found the necklace that she wore, and it broke beneath their sudden jerk. Cunningly he tossed the necklace upon the ground and trampled it with his heel. The watch and rings went flying across the wall and far out into the lake.

"This woman has been slugged!" he shouted. He did not know how much of the tragedy these men had witnessed. Boldness was his cue for the moment; stealth could follow later. "She's been in the water. I'm afraid it's murder. The man who did it went that way. Yell for the police!"

If the assailant was James Bansemer, Droom was doing his duty by him; if it was another, he was doing his duty by society.



CHAPTER XVI.

DROOM'S intentions were clear. It was not a tender heart nor was it chivalry which prompted him to do the deed of valor just described. He had started out to do his duty by James Bansemer because he was in his hire, and he felt it still his duty to cover the tracks of his master as best he could. He knew that he was jeopardizing his own safety. The obstinate cunning of his nature insisted that the man he had watched was Bansemer, although his brief glimpse of the fugitive's face discouraged that belief.

The gaunt clerk kept his chin well covered with his great muffler; the broad collar of his ulster was turned up about his face. The rapid plan that dashed into his mind comprehended but two things, the effort to restore life to Frances Cable and the hope of escaping without being recognized. He felt that she had not been in the water long enough to drown. Every hope depended upon the force of the blow that he imagined had been delivered.

Chilled to the bone, his teeth chattering like castanets, the old man was stooping over the inanimate form on the ground when the two men came up. In answer to their startled questions he merely said that he had seen the struggle from across the street, but had been too late to prevent the tragedy.

"We must get her into one of these houses quick," he grunted. "Take hold of her, you. And you over there,

Chilled to the bone, his teeth chattering.

hurry and ring a doorbell. Get inside and phone for a doctor—a doctor first and then the police. We may be able to save her life."

The first of the rich men's homes denied them admission. The man of the house said he would not "stand for the notoriety." Droom, supporting the head of the wet, icy figure, made a remark which the man was never to forget. At the second house they were admitted.

In an instant all was confusion. A card game was broken up, and guests of the house assisted their host and hostess in doing all manner of unnecessary things. Droom gave the commands which sooner or later resolved themselves into excited, wrathy demands upon the telephone operator, calls for a certain nearby doctor, calls for the police, calls for stimulants, maids, hot water bottles—everything.

"She's been robbed," said one of the men. "Her rings have been torn off. Look at the blood!"

"She's well dressed, too," said another. "Say, her face looks familiar"—

To the amazement of every one, the lips of the woman parted and a gasping, choking sound issued from between them, a slight shudder swept over her frame.

"She's alive!" exclaimed Droom. "Get these wet clothes off of her—quick!"

The men stood grouped in the hallway while the women tore the wet garments from the reviving victim and prepared a warm bed for her. Elias Droom was edging toward the door, bent on escape, when the awed, chattering voice of the young fellow who had assisted in carrying her to the house arrested him. A great sense of relief crept over him as he listened to the young man's story; his eyes blinked with satisfaction. He was forgetting his own remark of a minute ago that he was freezing and must get into some dry clothes at once. The young man was saying:

"It happened right out there by the sea wall—where the big break is. Harry and I were coming up the Drive, and I called attention to a man running south along the wall. Just then this gentleman ran over from this side of the street, and a minute or two later we saw him jump into the break over there. 'Suicide, I thought, but he wasn't a minute coming up. There was the woman! He'd pulled her out! By thunder, it was the bravest thing I ever saw! He"—

And then it was that everybody began to shower praise upon the man who only had tried to do his duty by the one who hired him to do ugly, not gallant, deeds.

"Did you watch which way the robber ran?" demanded Droom eagerly.

"Lost him in the dark. He ran like fury. You must have scared him off," said the second young man. "I wish we could have seen his face. Did you see it?"

"Not distinctly," answered Droom. "He struck me as being a slim young fellow, that's all." Of one thing he was assured—the evidence of these two men would prove that he had acted as a valiant protector and not as a thug, a fear which had not left his mind until now. They had seen the fleeing assailant, but there was only one person who could identify him. That person was Frances Cable, the victim. If it was not James Bansemer, then who could it have been?

The door opened, and an agitated young woman came out.

"It is Mrs. Cable!" she cried in trembling tones.

The physician arrived at that moment, and a few minutes later came an officer who had been hailed from the doorway. While the policeman was listening to the voluble young eyewitnesses Droom stood aloof, puzzling himself vainly in the effort to solve an inside mystery. He had been ready a few minutes before to curse himself for pulling the woman out of the water, but now as the belief grew stronger within him that her assailant was not James Bansemer his viewpoint changed. If such was the case there would be no need to fear Mrs. Cable's story if she revived sufficiently to tell it. On the other hand, if it was Bansemer, he had rescued her to an ill purpose. He was conscious finally that some one was speaking to him.

"What do you know of this?" demanded the policeman. Droom repeated his brief story. "What is your name and where do you live?"

"My name is Elias Droom, and I live over in Wells street."

"Could you identify the man?"

"I don't think so."

"What were you doing over in this part of town?"

"Walking up to see the skaters on the park lagoon. But what's that got to do with it? You'd better be out looking for the thief instead of wasting time on me here," snarled Droom. The officer gasped, and there is no telling what might have happened if the captain and a swarm of bluecoats had not appeared on the scene at that moment. Two minutes later they were off scouring the lake front in search of the mysterious holdup man. Two plain clothes men remained to question the witnesses and to inspect the neighborhood in which the crime was committed.

Word came from the inner room that Mrs. Cable was regaining consciousness.

"Does—can she throw any light on the affair?" asked Elias Droom.

"She has uttered no word except her husband's name. I think she is still calling upon him for help, poor thing," said the young woman who bore the news.

"Cable ought to be notified," said one of the men.

"Don't do it over the phone," said Droom quickly. "I'm going past his house. I'll stop in and tell him. Let me out, officer. I must get out of these wet garments. I'm an old man, you know."

The probable solution had come to Droom like a flash. As he hurried up the street his mind was full of the theory. He scarcely could wait for the door of David Cable's house to be opened in response to his vigorous ringing. The maid announced that Mr. and Mrs. Cable were out. It was enough for Droom. He put the puzzle together in that instant. David Cable's face was the one he had seen, not James Bansemer's. The maid set up a hysterical shrieking when he bluntly told her of the mishap to her mistress, but he did not wait to answer questions. He was off to find James Bansemer. The volcano he had been watching so long was about to burst, and he knew it.

Forgetting his wet garments, he entered a drug store and telephoned to Bansemer's home. His employer an

swered the call so readily that Droom knew he had not been far from the instrument that evening. There was a note of disappointment in his voice when Droom's hoarse tones replied to his polite "Hello!"

"I'll be over in half an hour," said Droom. "Very important business. Is Graydon there?"

"He's just gone to Cable's. Some one telephoned for him a minute or so ago. What's wrong? Do you know?"

"I'll be there in fifteen minutes," was all that Droom would say.

Elias' memory could not carry him back to the time when he had hired a cab. A cab was one of the luxuries he had not cultivated. One can only imagine his surprise, then, when he found himself hailing a passing hansom, and greater the surprise he must have felt when he clambered in and ordered the driver to go in a gallop to a certain place in Wells street. Ten minutes later he was attired in dry, warm clothes and in the cab again, bound for Bansemer's home. What he said to James Bansemer on that memorable occasion need not be repeated. It is only necessary to say that his host was bitterly impressed and willing to admit that the developments might prove serious. They could only speculate as to what had transpired between David Cable and his wife out there by the sea wall, but it was enough for them to know that a crisis was at hand.

"We'll see what the morning papers say about the affair," said Bansemer, uneasy and cold.

The morning papers were full of the sensational robbery, the prominence of the victim and the viciousness of the attack. Elias Droom read the accounts eagerly as he breakfasted in the dingy little restaurant near his home, bright and early. He grinned appreciably over the share of glory that fell to him, and he actually cackled over the new developments in the great mystery.

He had observed with relief that the name of James Bansemer was not mentioned. The reports from the bedside of the robber's victim were most optimistic. She was delirious from the effects of the shock, but no serious results were expected. The great headlines on the first page of the paper he was reading set his mind temporarily at rest. There was no suggestion of truth in them.

The reader of this narrative, who knows the true facts in the case, is doubtless more interested in the movements and emotions of David Cable than in the surmises of others. It would be difficult for a certainty to ask one to put himself in Cable's place and to experience the sensations of that unhappy man as he fled along the dark shore of the lake. Perhaps much will be taken on faith if the writer simply says that the fugitive finally slunk from the weeds and refuse of what was then called "the district of Lake Michigan"—"Streeterville" in local parlance—to find himself panting and terror stricken in the bleak east end of Chicago avenue. It was not until then that he secured control of his nerves and resorted to the stealth and cunning of the real criminal.

From that time until he stood shivering and white with dogged intention in a theater foyer, bent upon establishing an alibi, his movements are scarcely worth the details. Between the acts he saw a dozen men whom he knew and he took drinks with several of them. His tremendous will power carried him through the ordeal in a way that could not have fallen to the good fortunes of the ordinary lawbreaker.

Every second of the time his thoughts were of the thing which was being buffeted by the icy waters of the lake. Where was that thing now? How far out into the lake had it been carried?

His body was covered with the cold perspiration of dread and horror. His soul was moaning; his whole being was aghast with the awfulness of the deed; he could have shrieked aloud in his madness. How he lived through the hour in that theater he never could have told, nor could he believe that he was sitting there with all those frightful thoughts piling themselves upon him. Other people laughed and shouted with happiness; he stared and wept in his heart and shivered and cringed and groaned within himself.

He had killed her! She had been true to him, and yet he had taken her life, the life she had given him! He gave no thought to Jane, no thought to Bansemer. He thought only of himself as the slayer.

Would her body be recovered? What would be his excuse, what his punishment? The gallows? A thousand horrors ran riot in his brain, a thousand tremors with each.

But why dwell upon the feelings of this miserable wretch? Why say more of his terror, his misery, his remorse? He held himself in the seat until the middle of the last act of the play. At last, unable to restrain himself longer, he arose and almost ran from the theater. That instinct which no slayer can control or explain was overpowering him. It was the instinct which attracts the murderer to the spot where his crime was committed. No man can describe or define this resistless impulse, and yet all criminology records it, clear and unmistakable. It is no less than a form of curiosity. Driven by this irresistible force, David Cable, with bravado that cost him dearly, worked his uninterrupted way to the scene of his crime. By trolley car to Chicago avenue and then, like a homeless dog scenting his way fearfully, to a corner not far from the break in the wall.

His legs trembled and his eyes grew wide with dread. The swish of the water came to his ears, and he stood still for many minutes, listening for a cry for help from off the shore. But none came, and again skulking alongside the houses of his friends, he cov-

ered the blocks that lay between him and the magnetic rift in the wall. Near the corner he stopped, with a start of alarm.

The figure of a man could be seen standing like a statue on the very spot where he had seen her disappear. While he stood there, his heart scarcely beating, the solitary figure was joined by two others. Cable shrank back into the dense shadows. Like a flash it occurred to him that they were searching for the body. A shriek of agony arose to his lips. But he checked it.

Far off on one of the crosstown streets a newsboy was calling an extra—hoarse, unintelligible shouts that froze his blood. He bent his ear to catch the faraway words of the boy. "All about de nor' side murder!" He cringed and shook under the raucous shout. He knew what it meant.

A policeman suddenly turned the corner and came toward him. The first impulse was to fly; the next was to stand and deliver himself. The resolution came with shocking unexpectedness. He would give himself up! He would admit that he had killed his wife! The words of anguish were on his lips when the policeman spoke.

"Is it you, Mr. Cable? How is she, sir?"

Cable did not hear the man, for, as he opened his lips to cry out his own guilt, a thought formed in his brain that almost staggered him with its cunning savagery. Why not let the penalty fall on James Bansemer? She had gone out to meet him! If she had not destroyed the note it would hang James Bansemer, and James Bansemer was worse than a murderer. But even as this remarkable thought rushed into his brain the last words of the officer began to drive it out.

"Is she going to pull through, sir?" was the next question, and he caught it vaguely.

"Pull through?" he murmured inarticulately. He leaned against a great stone rail suddenly. Everything was leaping before his eyes.

"Good Lord, Mr. Cable—I—I forgot. Don't you know about it?" gasped the officer.

"Know what?" asked Cable, completely dazed.

"Go home at once, sir. I didn't mean to—oh, hurry, sir. Don't be worried. They say she'll be all right. Sure! She's been hurt a little, sir."

"My daughter?" demanded Cable, as keen as a razor in an instant. His heart was trying to jump from his body.

"Your wife, sir. Nothin' serious, sir. She was held up along here somewhere and robbed. They're sure to get the villain. She"—

But Cable was off like a deer for his home, racing as though on air.

Nothing else mattered now. She was alive! He could have her with him again to love as he never had loved her before.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO days passed before David Cable was permitted to see his wife. During those trying hours he lived an age of agony in suspense. She had been removed to her home late on the night of the "holdup," as the newspapers felt justified in calling it. He did not go to his office the next day nor the next, but haunted her door, sleepless, nervous, held close by dread. A dozen times at least he sought admittance to her room, but was always turned away, cursing the doctor and the nurses for their interference.

His worst fear, however, was that his wife would not forgive him. Not the dread of exposure nor his own shame or remorse, not even the punishment that the law might inflict, could be compared to the fear of what might be her lifelong hatred. He grew to feel that the doctor, the nurses, the servants, looked upon him with strange, unfriendly though respectful eyes. In his heart he believed that his wife had cursed him in their presence, laying bare his part in the unhappy transaction.

At last the suspense became unbearable. He had noticed a slight change in Jane's manner and at once attributed it to something his wife had said, for Jane had been allowed in the sick room. The discovery that she was not his child had not as yet struck deep into his understanding. In a vague sort of way he realized that she was different, now that he knew, but it was impossible for him to consider her in any other light than that of the years gone by. The time would come when the full realization would cut into his heart more deeply than now, but at present a calamity of his own making was forcing all other troubles into the background. His greatest desire was to reach his wife's side, to know the worst that could come of his suit for forgiveness.

The evening of the second day he swore that he would see her—and alone. They admitted him, and he entered trembling in every nerve. She was lying, white and haggard, in her bed, her back toward him. He paused for an instant and was certain that he saw her shudder violently. It was significant. She feared and loathed him.

"Is it you, David?" he heard her ask weakly. "At last! Oh, I was afraid that something had happened to you! That"—

(Continued Next Friday.)

THE SLEEPING SICKNESS WHICH MEANS DEATH

How many readers have heard of this terrible disease? It prevails in that far-away country—Africa—especially the Congo district. It is caused by the bite of the tsetse fly. When it bites a person, the sleeping symptoms begin and finally the sufferer sleeps until death occurs.

Contrast this with the peaceful, balmy sleep of health. Is there anything more wearing than to lie awake at night, tossing about, nervous, with cold feet, hot head and mercy knows what else? Short of letting the tsetse fly bite us we would do almost anything for relief. How can we prevent it? Mr. George Hayes, of Union City, Pa., writes: "I had lost my appetite, was all run-down, could not sleep nights. I had tried everything without relief. Vinol was recommended, and to my surprise, it helped me at once; gave me a splendid appetite and now I sleep soundly."

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