



BY GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

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"He's a bit off in his physiology, my dear," said Cecil, with a nervous attempt at humor. He did not like the expression in his sister's face. Somehow, he was ashamed.

"Oh, it's bad enough," said Penelope. "It was his left arm—the upper arm, too. I think the aim was rather good."

"Pray, how do you know all of this, Penelope?" asked her ladyship, lifting her eyebrows. "I've heard that you see Mr. Shaw occasionally, but you can't be his physician, I'm sure."

Penelope flushed to the roots of her hair, but suppressed the retort which would have been in keeping with the provocation.

"Oh, dear, no!" she replied. "I'm too soft hearted to be a physician. I saw Mr. Shaw just after the—ah—the accident."

"You saw Shaw—I mean you saw Shaw?" gasped Bazelhurst.

"She sees him frequently, Cecil. It was not at all unusual that she should have seen him today. I daresay he waited to show you his wound before going to a surgeon."

Penelope could not resist the temptation to invent a story befitting the moment. Assuming a look of concern, she turned to her brother and said: "He is coming to see you about it tomorrow, and he is coming armed to the teeth, attended by a large party of friends. Mr. Shaw says he will have satisfaction for the death of that dog if he has to shoot everybody on the place."

"Good Lord!" cried the duke. There was instant excitement. "I believe the wretch will do it too."

"Oh, I say, Bazelhurst, settle with him for the dog," said De Peyton nervously. He looked at his watch and then at his wife. The entire party now was listening to the principal speakers.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Lady Evelyn. "He won't come. It's all bluster. Don't let it frighten you, Cecil. I know the manner of man."

"I wish you could have seen him this morning," murmured Penelope, thoroughly enjoying the unexpected situation. Her conscience was not troubled by the prevarication.

"By Jove, I think it would be wise to send over and find out what he valued the brute at," said Cecil, mopping his brow.

"Good! We'll send Penelope to act as ambassador," said her ladyship. "She seems to be on friendly terms with the enemy."

"To act as ambassador from Cowardice Court?" questioned Penelope loftily, yet with cutting significance. "No, I thank you. I decline the honor. Besides," with a reflective frown, "I don't believe it's diplomacy he's after."

"I say, what the deuce do you suppose the confounded savage has in mind?" exclaimed the duke. "I've heard of the way these cowboys settle their affairs. You don't imagine"—and he paused significantly.

"It looks like it's going to be a d—rather disagreeable affair," said De Peyton sourly.

"Good heavens! What are we to do if he comes here with a lot of desperadoes and begins to shoot?" cried Mrs. Odwell, genuinely alarmed. "I've read so much of these awful mountain feuds."

"Don't be alarmed. Lord Bazelhurst will attend to the gentleman," said Lady Evelyn blandly. His lordship's monocle clattered down and the ice rattled sharply in his glass.

"To—to be sure," he agreed. "Don't be in the least worried. I'll attend to the upstart. What time's he coming, Pen?"

A door banged noisily near by, and every one jumped as though a gun had been fired. While the "Ohs" were still struggling from their lips Hodder, the butler, came into the room, doing his best to retain his composure under what seemed to be trying circumstances.

"What is it, Hodder?" demanded her ladyship.

"The cook, your ladyship. She's fallen downstairs and broken her leg," announced Hodder. He did not betray it, but he must have been tremendously surprised by the sigh of relief that went up on all sides. Lord Bazelhurst went so far as to laugh.

"Ha, ha! Is that all?"

"Oh, dear, I'm so glad!" cried Miss Folsom impulsively. "I was frightened half to death. It might have been Mr.—"

"Don't be silly, Rose," said Lady Bazelhurst. "Where is she, Hodder?"

"In the laundry, your ladyship. There are two fractures."

"By Jove, two legs instead of one, then. Worse than I thought," cried Bazelhurst, draining his glass.

"Send at once for a doctor, Hodder, and take her to her room. Isn't it annoying?" said her ladyship. "It's so difficult to keep a cook in the mountains."

"Don't see how she can get away without legs," observed De Peyton.

"I'll come with you, Hodder. Perhaps I can do something for her," said Penelope, following the butler from the room.

"Don't take too many patients on your hands, my dear," called the mistress, with a shrill laugh.

"Yes. Remember tomorrow," added

the duke. Then suddenly, "I believe I'll lend a hand." He hurried after Penelope rather actively for him.

CHAPTER V.

"I shall go tonight."

LORD BAZELHURST visited his wife's room later in the night, called there by a peremptory summons. Cecil had been taking time by the forelock in anticipation of Shaw's descent in the morning and was inclined to jocundity.

"Cecil, what do you think of Penelope's attitude toward Mr. Shaw?" she asked, turning away from the window which looked out over the night in the direction of Shaw's place.

"I didn't know she had an attitude," replied he, trying to focus his wavering gaze upon her.

"She meets him clandestinely and she supports him openly. Isn't that an attitude, or are you too drunk to see it?"

"My dear, remember you are speaking of my sister," he said with fine dignity but little discrimination. "Besides, I am not too drunk. I do see it. It's a demmed annoying attitude. She's a traitor, un'stand me? A trait-to-tor. I intend to speak to her about it."

"It is better that you should do it," said his wife. "I am afraid I could not control my temper."

"Penelope's a disgrace—an absolute disgrace. How many legs did Hodder say she'd—she'd broken?"

"Oh, you're disgusting!" cried Lady Evelyn. "Go to bed! I thought I could talk to you tonight, but I can't. You scarcely can stand up."

"Now, Evelyn, you do me injustice. I'm only holding to this chair for keep it from moving 'round the room. See that? Course I can't stand up!" he cried triumphantly.

"I am utterly disgusted with you. Oh, for a man! A man with real blood in his veins, a man who could do something besides eat and drink at my cost. I pay your debts, clothe you, feed you—house your ungrateful sister—and what do I get in return? This!"

Lord Bazelhurst's eyes steeled beneath this unexpected assault, his legs stiffened, his shoulders squared themselves in a pitiful attempt at dignity.

"Lady Bazelhurst, you—you"—and then he collapsed into the chair, bursting into maudlin tears. She stood over by the dressing table and looked pitilessly upon the weak creature whose blood-coughing sobs filled the room. Her color was high, her breathing heavy.

There came a knock at the door, but she did not respond. Then the door opened quietly and Penelope entered the room, resolutely, fearlessly. Evelyn turned her eyes upon the intruder and stared for a moment.

"Did you knock?" she asked at last.

"Yes. You did not answer."

"Wasn't that sufficient?"

"Not tonight, Evelyn. I came to have it out with you and Cecil. Where is he?"

"There!"

"Asleep?" with a look of amazement.

"I hope not. I should dislike having to call the servants to carry him to his room."

"I see. Poor old chap!" She went over and shook him by the shoulder. He sat up and stared at her blankly through his drenched eyes. Then, as if the occasion called for a supreme effort, he tried to rise, ashamed that his sister should have found him in his present condition. "Don't get up, Cecil. Wait a bit and I'll go to your room with you."

"What have you to say to me, Penelope?" demanded Evelyn, a green light in her eyes.

"I can wait. I prefer to have Cecil understand," she said bitterly.

"If it's about our affair with Shaw it won't make any difference whether Cecil understands or not. Has your friend asked you to plead for him? Does he expect me to take him up or your account and have him here?"

"I was jesting when I said he would come tomorrow," said Penelope, ignoring the thrust and hurrying to her subject. "I couldn't go to sleep tonight if I neglected to tell you what I think of the outrage this morning. You and Cecil had no right to order Tompkins to shoot at Mr. Shaw. He is not a trespasser. Some one killed his dog today. When he pursued the coward a second shot was fired at him. He was wounded. Do you call that fair fighting? Ambushed, shot from behind a tree. I don't care what you and Cecil think about it. I consider it despicable. Thank God, Cecil was not really to blame. It is about the only thing I can say to my brother's credit."

Lady Bazelhurst was staring at her young sister-in-law with wide eyes. It was the first time in all her petted, vain life that any one had called her to account. She was at first too deeply amazed to resent the sharp attack.

"Penelope Drake!" was all she could say. Then the fury in her soul began to search for an outlet. "How dare you? How dare you?"

"I don't mean to hurt you. I am only telling you that your way of treating this affair is a mistake. It can be rectified. You don't want to be lawless; you don't understand what a narrow escape from murder you have had. Evelyn, you owe reparation to Mr. Shaw. He is—"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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