

JANE CABLE

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

(Continued from Page 14.) He worshipped. The love in those happy, glowing eyes could not be mistaken for loyal indifference.

She was more beautiful than ever to his hungry, patient eyes. She was more desirable, more priceless. David Cable and his wife had been immensely benefited in every way by their month's sojourn abroad. Jane had found the sunshine for them, and it had been her purpose in all these months to keep them free from the shadows. They had traveled Europe over, and they had lived in the full warmth of pleasure.

Cable took Graydon aside as they entered the hotel. The latter had implored Jane to give him a few minutes alone at the earliest possible moment. "Tell me about your father, Graydon," said David Cable.

"He is still in—Joliet," replied the young man quietly.

"He has not offered to help us in clearing up the mystery?"

"I have had no word from him, Mr. Cable. He seems to be in his tomb. I am afraid he will not help us, sir. He has said he would not. That means a great deal. I am sorry to say."

He then told him of Elias Droom's strange invitation, adding that he believed the old man was ready to reveal all that he knew.

"She must go with you tonight, then," said Cable. "It is necessary. She wants to know the truth. She has said so."

"It won't matter, sir, so far as I am concerned. She—"

"She has come back, my boy. Determined to go on with her plans. I am sorry, Graydon, but I am at last convinced that she means to give her life to the work."

"By heaven, Mr. Cable, she shall not do it! I can't live without her!" cried Graydon miserably. Cable smiled sadly as he shook his head.

At half past 7 o'clock Jane Cable and Graydon met Droom at Sherry's. She was paler than usual, and there was a queer chill in her heart. Easement was more nervous than he had ever been before in his life.

Elias Droom, the strangest creature in the big restaurant, arose to greet them as they entered the doors. He had been waiting inside and out for half an hour, and his welcome was quite in keeping with his character. He uttered a few gruff words of greeting to her, accompanied by a perfunctory smile that gave out no warmth, then he started with rude haste toward the table he had reserved. Not a word concerning her welfare, her health, her return to the home land—sign of interest or consideration.

They followed him silently, anxiously. The old man was conspicuously repulsive in his finery. It is unnecessary to say that his clothes did not fit his lank figure; tailors cannot perform miracles. His long chin was carefully shaven, but the razor could not remove the ruts and creases that hid the thick stubble of gray and black. Not one, but a hundred diners, looked with curiosity upon the nervous, uncouth old man. There was a buzz of interest and a craning of necks when the crowd saw the handsome couple join him at the table in the corner.

"I wish you'd order the dinner for me, Graydon," he said rather plaintively. "I can pay for it, Miss Cable," he added, with an attempt at joviality, "but I'm no good at ordering. These young swells know all about it. Get champagne, Graydon. Order something nice for Miss Cable. Anywhere up to \$20. I'm not a millionaire, Miss Cable. Tell the waiter I'll pay for it. Graydon. This is a swell place, isn't it, Miss Cable? I've never been in Europe, but they say they can't touch our restaurants over there. Get oysters, Graydon."

"By Jove, Elias, you are giving us a treat," laughed Graydon. The old man's mood changed suddenly. He was beaming in his effort to be agreeable. A glance around the room had convinced him that the prettiest woman there was sitting at his table. He felt a new sense of pride.

"I am proud of myself," said Droom, and he meant it.

"It's very good of you to ask me to come, Mr. Droom," said Jane, her bright eyes meeting his before they could lift themselves into the customary stare above her head.

"I'm not so sure about that," said Elias. From time to time he glanced uneasily toward a table at his left. It was set for six persons, none of whom had arrived. "I trust it will not be the last time you will honor me, Miss Cable. I am getting very hospitable in my old age. If you don't mind, Graydon, I won't drink this cocktail. I may take the champagne. I'm quite a teetotaler, you see. Milk, always. By the way, Graydon," he said, turning suddenly to the young man, "I suppose you've led her to believe that I had a motive in asking her to dine tonight—I mean other than the pleasure it would give to me."

"I rather thought something of the sort," stammered Graydon.

"Well, there is a motive. I've decided at last to tell all I know. You'll look like that, Miss Cable, if you don't track attention. Calm yourself. It will be some time before the story is forthcoming. Besides, I doubt very much whether you'll get any great satisfaction out of it, although it may clear things up a bit for you. If you've been hoping that your father and mother—well, we'll take our time. Here are the oysters. Oysters make me think of your father, Graydon. Don't choke, my boy," he chuckled as Graydon stiffened quickly. "He had a woman arrested at her own dinner party one night—right over here in Fifth avenue too. Search warrant an' all that. The oysters were being served when the papers were served. Ah, he was a greaser, he had dared him, you see. Did you ever hear of the other time when he permitted an ig-

norant host to invite two deadly enemies to the same dinner? One fellow had robbed the other fellow of his wife. Terrible scandal. Your father knew that they expected to kill one another on sight. And yet when the host told him whom he expected to invite he let him ask the two men. He told me about it afterward. It amused him. Everybody but the host knew of the row, and there was a panic in the drawing room."

"Good Lord," gasped Graydon, helplessly pushing the oysters away, "why are you telling me this?"

"Oh, it was a great joke. It's a good dinner story. The joke comes in at the end. Both those fellows got tight and went home with their arms about one another. By the way, Graydon, what do you hear from your father?"

Graydon looked uncomfortably at Jane, whose face was set with distress. "Elias, you've got no right to"— began the young man coldly.

"I beg your pardon if I've offended," said Droom absently. "I don't know the etiquette of small talk. Forgive me. I was interested; that was all."

"It may interest you to know that I had a long talk with Mr. Clegg this afternoon. He says there is a movement on foot to secure a pardon for your father. Father hasn't asked any one to intercede. It is known that he will go to England as soon as he is released. That's an inducement, you see," he said bitterly.

Droom's face turned a frozen white. His steely eyes took on a peculiar glaze, and his hand grasped his leg as if it were a vice intended to hold him in his chair.

"I haven't told you about it, Jane," went on Graydon. "Mr. Clegg has seen father, and he says he is indifferent about it. He intends to leave the country in any event. I am going to write to him tonight, asking him to let them apply for a pardon. It may save him from three years more of servitude. Mr. Clegg is sure he can get his release. What's the matter, Elias?"

The old clerk's body had stiffened, and the look on his face was something horrible to behold. Terror was visible in every lineament. His companions started from their chairs in alarm when they saw the old man succeed in regaining a semblance of self control. His body relaxed, and his jaw dropped. His voice was trembling and weak as he responded, an apologetic grin on his face.

"Nothing—nothing at all. A momentary pain. Don't mind me. Don't mind me," he mumbled. "I have them often. I think it's my heart. What were you saying, Graydon? Oh, yes, the pardon. I—I hope you'll mention me in writing to your father. Tell him I hope to see him if he comes to New York."

"I don't believe he likes you, Elias," said Graydon, half jestingly.

"What-his-his he said to you?" demanded Droom sharply.

"He rather resented your talking Jane and me to Joliet that day." The old man's grin was malicious. "He won't forgive you that."

"I shall never forget how he looked at you, Mr. Droom," said Jane, with a shudder. Droom trembled with a new spasm of fear.

Attention was diverted by the arrival of the party of six. The men were distinguished in appearance, the women aristocratic, but spirited. That they were those days at Sherry's was at once apparent. They were bowing right and left to nearby acquaintances. After much ado they finally relapsed into the chairs obsequiously drawn back for them, and the buzz of conversation throughout the place was resumed.

Graydon, lowering his voice, named the newcomers to Jane, who looked at them with fresh interest. The names were well known to New York and European society. For the moment Elias Droom was unnoticed. He took the opportunity to collect his nerves and to subdue his too apparent emotion. Jane was recalled from her polite scrutiny of the women at the next table by hearing her name mentioned in Droom's hoarsest voice, modified into something like a whisper.

"Miss Cable, I not only asked you to come here in order to tell you the name of your father, but to point him out to you."

There was an instant of breathless silence at the table. So startling was his announcement that every other sound in the room escaped the ears of his two listeners.

"There was a new hundred dollar bill found in the basket with you. Your grandfather's signature was on that bill. He was the president of the bank which issued it. Your mother was—"

Here he leaned forward and whispered a name that fairly stunned his hearers. Graydon caught his breath, and a new light appeared in his eyes. He was beginning to believe that the old man's brain was affected. Jane leaned forward in her chair, an incredulous smile on her lips.

"Don't jest, Elias," began Graydon, somewhat roughly.

(To be Continued.)

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