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CHAPTER III.

Society Bursts Upon Mr. Gormly. Enter at last, Miss Haldane, accompanied by her father, her mother, her brother, Miss Louise Van Vleck Stewart (one of her intimate friends and a possible sister-in-law), Dr. Warren Deveau (a retired physician, an old bachelor and an old and intimate friend of the family). The newcomers were all dressed in winter automobile garments. It was young Haldane who broke the somewhat awkward pause consequent upon their entrance.

"Mr. Goodrich," he began unbuttoning his coat and slipping it off as he advanced.

"Your pardon, sir," said Gormly, "but Mr. Goodrich is no longer the owner of this place."

"Why, Mr. Gormly," burst out Miss Haldane impetuously, as she turned at his voice and recognized him, "this is a great surprise! We didn't know that you were to be one of our neighbors."

"She had been in the background and had not observed their host until she heard him speak. As she spoke, she stepped forward impulsively with outstretched hand."

"Eleanor," exclaimed her father in great surprise, surveying Gormly as he spoke, with a stare as cold as the winter weather, "do you—ah—know this gentleman?"

"Certainly I do," returned the girl. "It is Mr. George Gormly of the Gormly store, you know."

"Ah, indeed," began her father. "I have known him for—" she paused uncertainly.

"Seven months yesterday, Miss Haldane," answered Gormly, who was nothing if not accurate.

"We have—er—bought things at your shop for a longer time than that, I fancy," here interposed Mrs. Haldane vaguely with an air of great condescension.

"You have been on my books, madam, as one of my most valued customers ever since I moved to Broadway twenty-one years ago," returned Gormly, who was by no means ashamed of his business, else he would not have continued in it.

"Yes," said Haldane at this juncture, "I have been making out checks with monotonous regularity to your firm ever since."

"My good man—" began Mrs. Haldane still somewhat vaguely, and evidently rather at a loss how to place this irreproachably clad and fine appearing gentleman who had sold his hands with trade and yet did not seem to be at all embarrassed or ashamed of it.

"Mother!" exclaimed the daughter, blushing with vexation. "Mr. Gormly, forgive me, I forgot that you did not know my family."

"I have seen them often in the store, Miss Haldane, and have even waited upon some of them in other days myself," replied Gormly, quite as cold and formal in his manner as any one in the room.

"Nevertheless I want the pleasure of presenting you to my mother. Mr. George Gormly, mother, my very good friend."

Mrs. Haldane drew herself up. Gormly bowed himself down in a bow most carefully calculated to express a proper degree of appreciation of the honor and nothing more.

"My friend, Miss Stewart; my father, and my brother, Mr. Livingstone Haldane; Dr. Deveau."

The persons mentioned bowed coolly, except that Livingstone Haldane intused a little more cordiality in his recognition than the others did, while Dr. Deveau actually stepped forward and extended his hand.

"My dear sir," he said genially, his old face beaming with good nature and genuine admiration, "I am delighted to have the privilege of shaking you by the hand. Anybody who has the courage to attack the Gotham Freight Traction company as you have done in the papers may be regarded as a public benefactor whom it is an honor to know."

"Thank you," said Gormly, grateful for this recognition.

"Sir," began Haldane, "an unfortunate accident to our machine has thrown us upon your hospitality. I did not know that my friend Goodrich had sold this place or—"

"Let that give you no concern, sir," answered Gormly; "I pray that you will consider the place and all in it as your own. I beg you will take off your wraps and make yourselves entirely at home."

"That's very handsome of you, I am sure," continued the elder Haldane, slowly removing his coat; "but my own place lies but six miles beyond here, and if you will permit us to telephone my babies, I think we shall have to trouble you but little."

"The telephone is in the library yonder, Mr. Haldane, and is at your service as is everything in the house. I regret that my own stables are not yet furnished. The small station wagon and pair which brought you up are the only horses I have on the place just now."

"And jolly well crowded we were!" said young Haldane.

"Meanwhile," continued Gormly, "may I ask have you had dinner? Can I offer you anything to eat, or—"

was Mr. Goodrich's major domo before I bought the place, and see what can be done."

A brief conversation with that functionary threw some little cheer over the situation. Gormly's own wardrobe, which had been sent down, would amply supply the men with whatever they needed, and the butler imparted the cheering news that the lodgekeeper was a married man with two grown daughters, and he had no doubt that such things as the women required might be secured from them.

"Send at once," said Gormly quickly, "and ask Mrs. Bullen to come up to the house and be of what service she can to the ladies. How are we off for bedrooms?"

"Plenty of them, sir, and all ready for guests, that they are prepared, and have Mrs. Bullen here immediately."

As the butler went off to attend to these orders, Gormly re-entered the room and found the whole party comfortably gathered about the fire. He explained that he had found a woman on the place, the lodgekeeper's wife; that he had sent the station wagon for her; and that she would be present doubtless within a half hour with such indispensable articles of attire as might serve to make the women guests at least comfortable.

"If you were only in communication with your shop, Mr. Gormly," said Mrs. Haldane—and whether she meant to be offensive or not, Gormly could not tell—"we would lack nothing."

"I am sorry for your sake, madam, that I am not. As it is, we shall have to do our best with the limited resources at hand."

Conversation ran on desultorily this way for a short time, when the butler announced the arrival of Mrs. Bullen. As he did so, the tall clock musically chimed out the hour of nine.

"Now that your woman is here, Mr. Gormly," said Mrs. Haldane, rising, "as I am somewhat fatigued from the ride and the experience, I shall retire to my room. I suppose you young

people won't think of going to bed at this unearthly hour?"

"No, indeed," answered Miss Stewart. "I think I'll stay awake until Christmas."

"Will you go, Bookman?" said Mrs. Haldane, addressing her husband.

"Why—er—my dear—"

"I was about to propose a table of bridge," said Dr. Deveau.

"An excellent idea," returned Haldane quickly; "but there are six of us here and—"

"I don't play," said Gormly quickly. "I'll stay out also," said Eleanor. "I



There Was Frank, Open Admiration in His Glance.

don't care much for bridge at best."

"Good night," said Mrs. Haldane, moving away, escorted by the butler, and met outside presently by Mrs. Bullen.

"Mr. Gormly and I will watch your game," said Eleanor.

"Is the way, Eleanor, may I ask

where you met Mr. Gormly?" queried her father.

"He is very much interested in our social settlement work. Many of his employees live in the vicinity of the new settlement house we are building, and I have had occasion to consult him at his office a great many times."

"Ah," said the elder man reflectively, wondering how much might be behind that entirely innocent statement. Meanwhile a footman arranged a card table, at which the quartet took their places and instantly became absorbed in the game. Miss Haldane manifested no special interest in the play, and at Gormly's suggestion she left the hall and went with him into the inviting little library through the broad open doors that gave access to it from the hall. Another fire was burning there. He drew a low chair before it in which he sat down. He himself stood with his arm resting on the mantel, looking down on her.

The two were in plain sight from the bridge table; but as they talked in low tones their conversation was inaudible in the hall. Haldane glanced curiously and uneasily at them from time to time; but finally, becoming absorbed in his game, paid them no further notice.

(To Be Continued.)

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