RICH MEN'S CHILDREN

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SYNOPSIS.

Bill Cannon, the bonanza king, and his daughter, Rose, who had passed up Mrs. Cornelius Ryan's ball at San Francisco to accompany her father, arrive at Antelope. Dominick Ryan calls on his mother to beg a ball invitation for his wife, and is refused. The determined old lady refuses to recognize her daughter-in-law.

CHAPTER III.

The Daughter of Heth.

He walked for nearly an hour, along quiet, lamp-lit streets where large houses fronted on gardens that exhaled moist earth scents and the breaths of sweet, unseen blossoms, up hills so steep that it seemed as if an earthquake might have heaved up the city's crust and bent it crisply like a piece of cardboard.

He looked down unseeing, thinking of the last three years.

When he had first met Bernice Iverson, she had been a typewriter and stenographer in the office of the Merchants and Mechanics Trust Company. He was twenty-four at the time, the only son of Cornelius Ryan, one of the financial magnates of the far west.

She was seven years older than he, but told him they were the same age. It was not a wasted lie, as she undoubtedly looked much younger than she was, being a slight, trimly-made woman who had retained a girlish elasticity of figure and sprightliness of manner. The entrapping of young Ryan was a simple matter. He had never loved and knew little of women. He did not love her, but she made him think he did, threw herself at him, led him quickly to the point she wished to reach, and secretly, without a suspicion on the part of her family, became his mistress. Six months later, having driven him to the step by her upbraidings and her apparent sufferings of conscience under the sense of wrong-doing, she persuaded him to marry her.

The marriage was a bombshell to the world in which young Ryan was a planet of magnitude. His previous connection with her—though afterward discovered by his mother—was at the time unknown. Bernice had induced him to keep the marriage secret till its hour of accomplishment, for she knew Mrs. Ryan would try to break it off and feared that she might succeed. Once Dominick's wife she thought that the objections and resentment of the older woman could be overcome. But she underrated the force and obstinacy of her adversary and the depth of the wound that had been given her. Old Mrs. Ryan had been stricken in her tenderest spot. Her son was her idol, born in her middle-age, the last of four boys, three of whom had died in childhood. In his babyhood she had hoarded money and worked late and early that he might be rich. Now she held the great estate of her husband in trust for him, and dreamed of the time when he should marry some sweet and virtuous girl and she would have grandchildren to love and spoil and plan for. When the news of his marriage reached her and she saw the woman he had made his wife, she understood everything. She knew her boy through and through and she knew just how he had been duped and entangled.

The marriage of her son was the

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bitterest blow of her life. It came when she was old, stiffened into habits of dominance and dictatorship, when her ambitions for her boy were gaining daily in scope and splendor. A blind rage and determination to crush the woman were her first feelings, and remained with her but slightly mitigated by the softening passage of time. She was a partisan, a fighter, and she instituted a war against her daughter-in-law which she conducted with all the malignant bitterness that marks the quarrels of women.

Dominick had not been married a month when she discovered the previous connection between him and his wife, and published it to the winds. A social power, feared and obeyed, she let it be known that to any one who received Mrs. Dominick Ryan her doors would be forever closed. Without withdrawing her friendship from her son she refused ever to meet or to receive his wife. In this attitude she was absolutely implacable. She imposed her will upon the less strong spirits about her, and young Mrs. Ryan was as completely shut off from her husband's world as though her skirts carried contamination. With masculine largeness of view in other matters, in this one the elder woman exhibited a singular, unworthy smallness. The carelessly large checks she had previously given Dominick on his birthday and anniversaries ceased to appear, and masculine gifts, such as pipes, walking-sticks, and cigar-cases, in which his wife could have no participating enjoyment, took their place. She had established a policy of exclusion, and maintained it rigidly.

Young Mrs. Ryan had at first believed that this rancor would melt away with the flight of time. But she did not know the elder woman. She was as unmeltable as a granite rock.

Bernice, who had expected to gain all from her connection with the all-powerful Ryans, at the end of two years found that she was an ostracized outsider from the world she had hoped to enter, and that the riches she had expected to enjoy were represented by the three thousand a year her husband earned in the bank. Her attempts to force her way into the life and surroundings where she had hoped her marriage would place her had invariably failed. If her feelings were not of the same nature as those of the elder Mrs. Ryan, they were fully as poignant and bitter.

The effort to get an invitation to the ball had been the most daring the young woman had yet made. Neither she nor Dominick had thought it possible that Mrs. Ryan would leave her out. So confident was she that she would be asked that she had ordered a dress for the occasion. But when Dominick's invitation came without her name on the envelope, then fear that she was to be excluded rose clamorous in her. For days she talked and complained to her husband as to the injustice of this course and his power to secure the invitation for her if he would. By the evening of the ball she had brought him to the point where he had agreed to go forth and demand it.

It was a hateful mission. He had never in his life done anything so humiliating. In his shame and distress he had hoped that his mother would give it to him without urging, and Bernice, placated, would be restored to good humor and leave him at peace. She could not have gained such power over him, or so bent him to her bidding, had she not had in him a fulcrum of guilty obligation to work on. She continually reminded him of "the wrong" he had done her, and how, through him, she had lost the respect of her fellows and her place among them. All these slights, snubs and insults were his fault, and he felt that this was true. To-night he had gone forth in dogged desperation. Now in fear, frank fear of her, he went home, slowly, with reluctant feet, his heart getting heavier, his dread colder as he neared the house.

It was one of those wooden structures on Sacramento Street not far from Van Ness Avenue where the well-to-do and socially-aspiring crowd themselves into a floor of seven rooms, and derive satisfaction from the proximity of their distinguished neighbors who refuse to know them. It contained four flats, each with a parlor bay-window and a front door, all four doors in neighborly juxtaposition at the top of a flight to six marble steps.

Dominick's was the top flat; he had to ascend a long, carpeted stairway with a turn half-way up to get to it. Now, looking at the bay-window, he saw lights gleaming from below the drawn blinds. Berny was still up. A lingering hope that she might have gone to bed died, and his sense of reluctance gained in force and made him feel slightly sick. He was there, however, and he had to go up. Fitting his key into the lock he opened the hall door.

It was very quiet as he mounted the long stairs, but, as he drew near the top, he became aware of a windy, whistling noise and looking into the room near the stair-head saw that all the gas-jets were lit and turned on full cock, and that the gas, rushing out from the burner in a ragged banner of flame, made the sound. He was about to enter and lower it when he heard his wife's voice coming from the open door of her room.

"It that you, Dominick?" she called.

Her voice was steady and high. Though it was hard, with a sort of precise clearness of utterance, it was not conspicuously wrathful.

"Yes," he answered, "it's I," and he forgot the gas-jets and walked up the hall. He did not notice that in the other rooms he passed the gas was turned on in the same manner. The whistling rush of its escape made a noise like an excited, unresting wind in the confined limits of the little flat.

The door of Berny's room was open, and under a blaze of light from the chandelier and the side lights of the bureau she was sitting in a rocking-chair facing the foot of the bed. She held in her hand a walking-stick of Dominick's and with this she had been making long scratches across the footboard, which was of walnut and was seamed back and forth, like a rock scraped by the passage of a glacier. As Dominick entered, she desisted, ceased rocking, and turned to look at him. She had an air of taut, sprightly impudence, and was smiling a little.

"Well, Dominick," she said jauntily, "you're late."

"Yes, I believe I am," he answered. "I did not come straight back."

"Took a walk," she said, turning to the bed and beginning to rock. "It's a queer sort of hour to choose for walking," and lifting the cane she recommenced her occupation of scratching the foot-board with it, tracing long, parabolic curves across the entire expanse, watching the cane's tip with her head tilted to one side. Dominick, who was not looking at her, did not notice the noise.

"I thought," she said, tracing a great arc from one side to the other, "that you were with your loving family—opening the ball, probably."

He did not move, but said quietly:

"It was impossible to get the invitation, Berny. I tried to do it and was refused. I want you to understand that as long as I live I'll never do a thing like that again."

"Oh, yes, you will," she said laughing and shaking her head like an amused child. "Oh, yes, you will." She threw her head back and, looking at the ceiling, laughed still louder with a note of fierceness in the sound. "You'll do it and lots more things like it. You'll do it if I want you to, Dominick Ryan."

He did not answer. She hitched her chair closer to the bed as if to return to an engrossing pastime, and, leaning back luxuriously, resumed her play with the cane. This time Dominick noticed the noise and turned. She was conscious that he was looking at her, and began to scratch with an appearance of charmed absorption, such as an artist might display in his work. He watched her for a moment in silent astonishment and then broke out sharply:

"What are you doing?"

"Scratching the bed," responded calmly.

"You must be mad," he said, striding angrily toward her and stretching a hand for the cane. "You're ruining it."

She whipped the cane to the other side, out of his reach.

"Am I?" she said, turning an eye of fiery menace on him. "Maybe I am, and what's that matter?" Then, turning back to the bed, "Too bad, isn't it, and the set not paid for yet."

"Not paid for!" he exclaimed, so amazed by the statement that he forgot everything else. "Why, I've given you the money for it twice!"

"Three times," she amended coolly, "and I spent it on things I liked better. I bought clothes, and jewelry with it, and little fixings I wanted. Yes, the bedroom set isn't all paid for yet and we've had it nearly two years. Who would have thought that the son of Con Ryan couldn't pay his bills!"

She rose, threw the cane into the corner, and, turning toward him, leaned back, half-sitting on the foot-board, her hands, palm downward, pressed on its rounded top.

Dominick and she had had many quarrels, ignominious and repulsive, but he had never before seen her in so savage a mood. Even yet he had not lost the feeling of responsibility and remorse he felt toward her. As he moved from the mantelpiece his eye had fallen on the ball-dress that lay, a sweep of lace and silver, across the bed, and on the bureau he had seen jewels and hair ornaments laid out among the powder boxes and scent bottles. The pathos of these futile preparations appealed to him and he made an effort to be patient and just.

"It's been a disappointment," he said, "and I'm sorry about it. But I've done all I could and there's no use doing any more. You've got to give it up. There's no use trying to make my mother give in. She won't."

"Won't she?" she cried, her voice suddenly loud and shaken with rage. "We'll see! We'll see! We'll see if I've married into the Ryan family for nothing."

Her wrath at last loosened, her control was instantly swept away. In a moment she was that appalling sight, a violent and vulgar woman in a raging passion. She ran around the bed and, seizing the dress, threw it on the floor and stamped on it, grinding the delicate fabric into the carpet with her heels.

"There!" she cried. "That's what I feel about it. That's the way I'll treat the things and the people I don't like! That dress—it isn't paid for, but I don't want it. I'll get another when I do. Have I married Con Ryan's son to need money and bother about bills? Not on your life! Did you notice the gas? Every burner turned on. Well, I did it just to have a nice bright house for you when you came home without the invitation. We haven't paid the bill for two months—but what does that matter? We're related to the Ryans. We don't have to trouble about bills."

He saw that she was beyond arguing with and turned to leave the room. She sprang after him and caught him by the arm, pouring out only too coherent streams of rage and abuse. It was the old story of the "wrongs" she had suffered at his hands, and his "ruin" of her. To-night it had no power to move him and he shook her off and left the room. She ran to the door behind him and leaning out, cried it after him.

He literally fled from her, down the hallway, with the open doorways sending their lurid light and hissing noise across his passage. As he reached the dining-room he heard her bang the door and with aggressive noise turn the key in the lock and shoot the bolt. Even at that moment the lack of necessity for such a precaution caused a bitter smile to move his lips.

He entered the dining-room and sat down by the table, his head on his hands. He sat thus for some hours, trying to think what he should do. He found it impossible to come to any definite conclusion for the future; all he could decide upon now was the necessity of leaving his wife, getting a respite from her, withdrawing himself from the sight of her. He had never loved her, but to-night the pity and responsibility he had felt seemed to be torn from his life as a morning wind tears a cobweb from the grass.

The dawn was whitening the window-panes when he finally got pen and paper and wrote a few lines. These, without prefix or signature, stated that he would leave the city for a short time and not to make any effort to find where he had gone or communicate with him. He wrote her name on the folded paper and placed it in front of the clock. Then he stole into his bedroom—they had occupied separate rooms for over six months—and packed a valise with his oldest and roughest clothes. After this he waited in the dining-room till the light was bright and the traffic of the day loud on the pavement, before he crept down the long stairway and went out into the crystal freshness of the morning.

CHAPTER IV.

Out of Night and Storm.

When Rose Cannon woke on the morning after her arrival at Antelope, a memory of the snowflakes of the evening before made her jump out of bed and patter barefooted to the window. It seemed to her it would be "lots of fun" to be snowed up at Antelope, and when she saw only a thin covering of white on the hotel garden and the diminishing perspective of roofs, she drew her mouth into a grimace of disappointment.

With hunched-up shoulders, her hands tucked under her arms, she stood looking out, her breath blurring the pane in a dissolving film of smoke. It was a cold little world. Below her the garden—the summer pride of Perley's Hotel—lay a sere, withered waste, its shrubs stiff in the grip of the cold. The powdering of snow on its frost-bitten leaves and

"Have I Married Con Ryan's Son to Need Money and Bother About Bills?"

grizzled grass added to its air of bleakness. Beyond rose the shingled roofs of Antelope's main street. Rose, standing gazing up, wondered if her father would go on to Greenhide, the new camp twenty miles from Antelope, where an important strike had recently been made.

Half an hour later when they met at breakfast he told her he would not leave for Greenhide that morning. Perley had warned him not to attempt it, and he for his part knew the country well enough to realize that it would be foolhardy to start under such a threatening sky. It would be all right to stop over at Antelope till the weather made up its mind what it meant to do. It might not be fun for her, but then he had warned her before they left San Francisco that she would have to put up with rough accommodations and unaccustomed discomforts.

Rose laughed. Her father did not understand that the roughness and novelty of it all was what she enjoyed. He was already a man of means when she was born, and she had known nothing of the hardships and privations through which he and her mother had struggled up to fortune. Rocky Bar the night before and Antelope this morning were her first glimpses of the mining region over which the pioneers had swarmed in '49, Bill Cannon, only a lad in his teens among them.

Perley's warnings of bad weather were soon verified. Early in the afternoon the idle, occasional snowflakes had begun to fall thickly, with a soft, persistent steadiness of purpose.

At four o'clock, Willoughby, the Englishman who had charge of the shut-down Bella K. mine, came, butting head down against the wind, a group of dogs at his heels, to claim the hospitality of the hotel. His watchman, an old timer, had advised him to seek a shelter better stored with provisions than the office building of the Bella K. Willoughby, whose accent and manner had proclaimed him as one of high distinction before it was known in Antelope that he was "some relation to a lord," was made welcome in the bar. His four red setter dogs, shut out from that hospitable retreat by the swing door, grouped around it and stared expectantly, each shout from within being answered by them with plaintive and ingratiating whines.

The afternoon was still young when the day began to darken. Rose Cannon, who had been sitting in the parlor, dreaming over a fire of logs, went to the window, wondering at the growing gloom. The wind had risen to a wild, sweeping speed, that tore the snow fine as mist. There were no lazy, woolly flakes now. They had turned into an opaque, slanting veil which here and there curled into snowy mounds and in other places left the ground bare.

Rose looked out on it with an interest that was a little soberer than the debonair blitheness of her morning mood. If it kept up they might be snowed in for days, Perley had said. That being the case, this room, the hotel's one parlor, would be her retreat, her abiding place—for her bedroom was as cold as an ice-chest—until they were liberated. With the light, half-whimsical smile that came so readily to her lips, she turned from the window and surveyed it judicially.

She was leaving the window to return to her seat by the fire when the complete silence that seemed to hold the outside world in a spell was broken by sudden sounds. Voices, the crack of a whip, then a grinding thump against the hotel porch, caught her ear and whirled her back to the pane. A large covered vehicle, with the whitened shapes of a smoking team drooping before it, had just drawn up at the steps. Two masculine figures, carrying bags, emerged from the interior, and from the driver's seat a muffled shape—a cylinder of wrappings which appeared to have a lively human core—gave forth much loud and profane language. The isolation and remoteness of her surroundings had already begun to affect the town-bred young lady. She ran to the door of the parlor, as ingenuously curious to see the new arrivals and find out who they were as though she had lived in Antelope for a year.

Looking down the hall she saw the front door open violently inward and two men hastily enter. The wind seemed to blow in and before Perley's boy could press the door shut the snow had whitened the damp matting. No stage passed through Antelope in these days of its decline, and the curiosity felt by Rose was shared by the whole hotel. The swing door to the bar opened and men pressed into the aperture. Mrs. Perley came up from the kitchen, wiping a dish. Cora appeared in the dining-room doorway, and in answer to Miss Cannon's inquiringly-lifted eyebrows, called across the hall:

"It's the Murphysville stage on the down-trip to Rocky Bar. I guess they thought they couldn't make it. The driver don't like to run no risks and so he's brought 'em round this way and dumped 'em here. There ain't but two passengers. That's them."

She indicated the two men who, standing by the hall stove, were divesting themselves of their wraps. One of them was a tall upright old man with a sweep of grizzled beard covering his chest, and gray hair falling from the dome of a bald head.

The other was much younger, tall also, and spare to leanness. He wore a gray fedora hat, and against its chill, unbecoming tint, his face, its prominent, bony surface nipped by the cold to a raw redness, looked sallow and unhealthy. With an air of solicitude he laid his overcoat across a chair, brushing off the snow with a careful hand. Buttoned tight in a black cutaway with the collar turned up about his neck, he had an appearance of being uncomfortably compressed into garments too small for him. His shiny-knuckled, purplish hands, pinching up the shoulders of his coat over the chair back, were in keeping with his general suggestion of a large-boned meagerly covered lankness. The fact that he was smooth-shaven, combined with the unusual length of dark hair that appeared below his hat-brim, lent him a suggestion of something interestingly unconventional, almost artistic. In the region where he now found himself he would have been variously set down as a gambler, a traveling clergyman, an actor, or perhaps only a vender of patent medicines who had some odd attractive way of advertising himself, such as drawing teeth with an electrical appliance, or playing the guitar from the tail-board of his showman's cart.

Now, having arranged his coat to its best advantage, he turned to Perley and said with a curiously deep and resonant voice:

"And, mine host, a stove in my bedroom, a stove in my bedroom or I perish."

Cora giggled and threw across the hall to Miss Cannon a delighted murmur of:

"Oh, say, ain't he just the richest thing?"

"You've got us trapped and caged here for a spell, I guess," said the older man. "Any one else in the same box?"

"Oh, you'll not want for company," said Perley, pride at the importance of the announcement vibrating in his tone. "We've got Willoughby here from the Bella K. with his four setter dogs, and Bill Cannon and his daughter up from the coast."

"Bill Cannon!"—the two men stared and the younger one said:

"Bill Cannon, the Bonanza King from San Francisco?"

"That's him all right," nodded Perley. "Up here to see the diggings at Greenhide and snowed in same as you."

Here Rose, fearing the conversation might turn upon herself, slipped from the doorway into the passage and up the stairs to her own room.

An hour later as she stood before the glass making her toilet for supper, a knock at the door ushered in Cora, already curled, powdered and beribboned for that occasion, a small kerosene lamp in her hand. In the bare room, its gloom only partly dispelled by the light from a similar lamp on the bureau and the red gleam from the stove, Miss Cannon was revealed in the becoming half-dusk made by these imperfectly-blending illuminations, a pink silk dressing-gown loosely enfolding her, a lightly brushed-in suggestion of fair hair behind her ears and on her shoulders. Her comb was in her hand and Cora realized with an uplifting thrill that she had timed her visit correctly and was about to learn the mysteries of Miss Cannon's coiffure.

"I brung you another lamp," she said affably, setting her offering down on the bureau. "One ain't enough light to dress decently by. I have three," and she sank down on the side of the bed with the air of having established an intimacy, woman to woman, by this act of generous consideration.

"Them gentlemen," she continued, "are along on this hall with you and your pa. The old one's Judge Washburne, of Colusa, a pioneer that used to know Mr. Perley's mother way back in Sacramento in the fifties, and knew your pa real well when he was poor. It's sort of encouraging to think your pa was ever poor."

Rose laughed and turned sidewise, looking at the speaker under the arch of her uplifted arm. There were hairpins in her mouth and an upwhirled end of blond hair protruded in a gleaming scattering of yellow over her forehead. She mumbled a comment on her father's early poverty, her lips showing red against the hair-pins nipped between her teeth.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Dog That Writes and Draws.

A clever dog made his bow at the Hippodrome, London, England, the other afternoon. "Dick" can draw a donkey's heda, make three geometrical figures, and write his signature. He can write equally well with both paws, either separately or in combination; while as an arithmetician he indulges in simple addition, multiplication, division and subtraction with ready accuracy.