

RICH MENS CHILDREN

By GERALDINE BONNER
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Illustrations by DOM J. LAVIN

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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, called 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. Dominick had been trapped into a marriage with Bernice Iverson, a stenographer, several years his senior. She squanders his money, they have frequent quarrels, and he slips away. Cannon and his daughter are snowed in at Antelope. Dominick Ryan is rescued from storm in unbecoming condition and brought to Antelope hotel. Antelope is cut off by storm. Rose Cannon nurses Dominick back to life. Two weeks later Bernice discovers in a paper where husband is and writes letter trying to smooth over difficulties between them. Dominick at last is able to join fellow snowbound prisoners in hotel parlor.

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

"Didn't the people at the Rocky Bar Hotel try to dissuade you from starting?" said Buford. "They must have known it was dangerous. They must have been worried about you or they wouldn't have telegraphed up."

"Oh, I believe they did." The young man tried to hide the annoyance the questions gave him under a dry brevity of speech. "They did all that they ought to have done. I'll see them again on my way down."

"And yet you persisted!" The actor turned to Rose with whom, as he sat beside her at table, he had become quite friendly. "The blind confidence of youth, Miss Cannon, isn't it a grand, inspiring thing?"

Dominick shifted his aching feet under the rug. He was becoming exceedingly irritated and impatient, and wondered how much longer he would be able to respond politely to the conversational assiduosities of the stranger.

"Now," continued Buford, "kindly satisfy my curiosity on one point. Why, when you were told of the danger of the enterprise, did you start?"

"Perhaps I liked the danger, wanted it to tone me up. I'm a bank clerk, Mr. Buford, and my life's monotonous. Danger's a change."

He raised his voice and spoke with sudden, rude defiance. Buford looked quickly at him, while his eyebrows went up nearly to his hair.

"A bank clerk, oh?" he said with a falling inflection of disappointment, much chagrined to discover that the child of millions occupied such a humble niche. "I—I—was not aware of that."

"An assistant cashier," continued Dominick in the same key of exasperation, "and I managed to get a holiday at this season because my father was one of the founders of the bank and they allow me certain privileges. If you would like to know anything else ask me and I'll answer as well as I know how."

His manner and tone so plainly indicated his resentment of the other's curiosity that the actor flushed and shrank. He was evidently well-meaning and sensitive, and the young man's rudeness hurt rather than angered him. For a moment nothing was said, Buford making no response other than to clear his throat, while he stretched out one arm and pulled down his cuff with a jerking movement. There was constraint in the air, and Rose, feeling that he had been treated with unnecessary harshness, sought to palliate it by lifting the book on her lap and saying to him:

"This is the book we were talking about when you came in, Mr. Buford. 'Wife in Name Only.' Have you read it?"

She handed him the ragged volume, and holding it off he eyed it with a scrutiny all the more marked by the way he drew his brows down till they hung like bushy eaves over his eyes.

"No, my dear young lady. I have not. Nor do I feel disposed to do so. 'Wife in Name Only!' That tells a whole story without reading a word. Were you going to read it?"

"No; Mr. Ryan and I were just looking over them. We were thinking about reading one of them aloud. This one happened to be on the pile."

"To me," continued Buford, "the name is repelling because it suggests sorrows of my own."

There was a pause. He evidently expected a question which undoubtedly was not going to come from Dominick, who sat fallen together in the arm-chair looking at him with moody ill-humor. There was more hope from Rose, who gazed at the floor but said nothing. Buford was forced to repeat with an unctuous depth of tone, "Suggests sorrows of my own," and fasten his glance on her, so that, as she raised her eyes, they encountered the commanding encouragement of his.

"Sorrows of your own?" she repeated timidly, but with the expected questioning inflection.

"Yes, my dear Miss Cannon," returned the actor with a melancholy which was full of a rich, dark enjoyment. "My wife is one in name only."

There was another pause, and neither showing any intention of breaking it, Buford remarked:

"That sorrow is mine."

"What sorrow?" said Dominick brusquely.

"The sorrow of a deserted man," returned the actor with now, for the

great distance and made him feel mortified and ill at ease.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Unknown Eros.

The ten days that followed were among the most important of Dominick Ryan's life. Looking back at them he wondered that he had been so blind to the transformation of his being which was taking place. Great emotional crises are often not any more recognized, by the individuals, than great transitional epochs are known by the nations experiencing them. Dominick did not realize that the most engrossing, compelling passion he had ever felt was slowly invading him. He did not argue that he was falling in love with a woman that he could never own and of whom it was a sin to think. He did not argue or think about anything. He was as a vessel gradually filling with elemental forces, and like the vessel he was passive till some jar would shake it and the forces would run over. Meantime he was held by a determination, mutinous and unreasoning as the determination of a child, to live in the present. He had the feeling of the desert traveler who has found the oasis. The desert lay behind him, burning and sinister with the agony of his transit, and the desert lay before him with its horrors to be faced, but for the moment he could lie still and rest and forget by the fountain under the cool of the trees.

He did not consciously think of Rose. But if she were not there he was uneasy till she came again. His secret exhilaration at her approach, the dead blankness of his lack of her when she was absent, told him nothing. These were the feelings he had, and they filled him and left no cool residue of reason wherewith to watch and guard. He was taken unawares, so dearly confident of his allegiance to his particular private tragedy that he did not admit the possibility of a defection. A sense of rest was on him and he set it down—if he ever thought of it at all—to the relief of a temporary respite. Poor Dominick, with his inexperience of sweet things, did not argue that respite from pain should be a quiescent, contented condition of being, far removed from that state of secret, troubled gladness that thrilled him at the sound of a woman's footsteps.

No situation could have been invented better suited for the fostering of sentiment. His helpless state demanded her constant attention. The attitude of nurse to patient, the solicitude of the consoling woman for the disabled, suffering man, have been, since time immemorial, recognized aids to romance. Rose, if an unawakened woman, was enough of one to enjoy richly this maternal office of alternate cossetting and ruling one who, in the natural order of things, should have stood alone in his

were virtuous, were also charming, she relinquished her dominion and retreated into that enfolded maidenly reserve and docility which we feel quite sure was the manner adopted by the ladies of the Stone Age when they felt it necessary to manage their lords.

She was as unconscious of all this as Dominick was of his growing absorption in her. If he was troubled she was not. The days saw her growing gayer, more blithe and light-hearted. She sang about the corridors, her smile grew more radiant, and every man in the hotel felt the power of her awakening womanhood. Her boyish frankness of demeanor was still undimmed by the first blurring breath of passion. If Dominick was not in the parlor her disappointment was as candid as a child's whose mother had forgotten to bring home candy. All that she showed of consciousness was that when he was there and there was no disappointment, she concealed her satisfaction, wrapped herself in a sudden, shy quietness, as completely extinguishing of all beneath as a nun's habit.

The continued, enforced intimacy into which their restricted quarters and indoor life threw them could not have been more effectual in fanning the growing flame if designed by a malicious Fate. There was only one sitting-room, and, unable to go out, they sat side by side in it all day. They read together, they talked, they played cards. They were seldom alone, but the presence of Bill Cannon, groaning over the fire with a three-week-old newspaper for company, was not one that diverted their attention from each other; and Cora and Willoughby, as opponents in a game of euchre, only helped to accentuate the comradeship which leagued them together in defensive alliance.

The days that were so long to others were to them of a bright, surprising shortness. Playing solitaire against each other on either side of the fireplace was a pastime at which hours slipped by. Quite unexpectedly it would be midday, with Cora putting her head round the doorpost and calling them to dinner. In the euchre games of the afternoon the darkness crept upon them with the stealthy swiftness of an enemy. It would gather in the corners of the room while Cora was still heated and flushed from her efforts to instruct Willoughby in the intricacies of the game, and yet preserve that respectful attitude which she felt should be assumed in one's relations with a lord.

The twilight hour that followed was to Dominick's mind the most delightful of these days of fleeting enchantment. The curtains were drawn, a new log rolled on the fire, and the lamp lit. Then their fellow prisoners began dropping in—the old judge stowing himself away in one of the horsehair arm-chairs, Willoughby and Buford lounging in from the bar, and Mrs. Perley with a basket of the

plains in forty-seven and the first Mormon settlement on the barren shores of Salt Lake. He had had encounters with the Indians, had heard the story of Olive Oatman from one who had known her, and listened to the sinister tale of the Donner party from a survivor. Bill Cannon had "come by the Isthmus" in forty-eight, a half-starved, ragged lad who had run away from ungenerous drudgery on a New York farm. His reminiscences went back to the San Francisco that had started up around Portsmouth Square, to the days when the banks of the American River had swarmed with miners, and the gold lay yellow in the prospector's pan. He had worked there shoulder to shoulder with men who afterwards made the history of the state and men who died with their names unknown. He had been an eye witness of that blackest of Californian tragedies, the lynching of a Spanish girl at Downieville, had stood pallid and sick under a pine tree and watched her boldly face her murderers and meet her death.

The younger men, warmed to emulation, contributed their stories. Perley had reminiscences bequeathed to him by his father who had been an alcalde in that transition year, when California was neither state nor territory and stood in unadministered neglect, waiting for Congress to take some notice of her. Buford told stories of the vicissitudes of a strolling player's life. He had been in the Klondike during the first gold rush and told tales of mining in the North to match those of mining on the "mother lode." Willoughby, thawed out of his original shyness, added to the nights' entertainments stories of the Australian bush, grim legends of the days of the penal settlements at Botany Bay. Young Ryan was the only man of the group who contributed nothing to these Sierran Nights' Entertainments. He sat silent in his chair, apparently listening, and, under the shadow of the hand arched over his eyes, looking at the girl opposite.

But the idyl had to end. Their captivity passed into its third week, and signs that release was at hand cheered them. They could go out. The streets of Antelope were beaten into foot-paths, and the prisoners, with the enthusiasm of children liberated from school, rushed into open-air diversions and athletic exercise. The first word from the outside world came by restored telegraphic communication. Consolatory messages poured in from San Francisco. Mrs. Ryan, the elder, sent telegrams as long as letters and showered them with the prodigality of an impassioned gratitude on the camp. Perley had one that he could not speak of without growing husky. Willoughby had one that made him blush. Dominick had several. None, however, had come from his wife and he guessed that none had been sent her, his remark to Rose to "let her alone" having been taken as a wish to spare her anxiety. It was thought that the mail would be in now in a day or two. That would be the end of the fairy tale. They sat about the fire on these last evenings discussing their letters, what they expected, and whom they would be from. No one told any more stories; the thought of news from the "outside" was too absorbing.

It came in the early dusk of an afternoon near the end of the third week. Dominick, who was still unable to walk, was standing by the parlor window, when he saw Rose Cannon run past outside. She looked in at him as she ran by, her face full of a joyous excitement, and held up to his gaze a small white packet. A moment later the hall door banged, her foot sounded in the passage, and she entered the room with a rush of cold air and a triumphant cry of:

"The mail's come."

He limped forward to meet her and take from her hand the letter she held toward him. For the first moment he looked at her, not at the letter, which dwindled to a thing of no importance when their eyes met over it. Her face was lit up by the keen outside air into a bright, beaming rosieness. She wore on her head a man's fur cap which was pulled down, and pressed wisps of fair hair against her forehead and cheeks. A loose fur-lined coat enveloped her to her feet, and after she had handed him his letter she pulled off the mittens she wore and began unfastening the clasps of the coat, with fingers that were purplish and cramped from the cold.

"There's only one for you," she said. "I waited till the postmaster looked all through them twice. Then I made him

give it to me and ran back here with it. The entire population of Antelope's in the post-office and there's the greatest excitement."

Her coat was unfastened and she threw back its long fronts, her figure outlined against the gray fur lining. She snatched off her cap and tossed it to an adjacent chair and with a quick hand brushed away the hair it had pressed down on her forehead.

"I got seven," she said, turning to the fire, "and papa a whole bunch, and the Judge, quantities, and Willoughby, three. But only one for you—poor, neglected man!"

"Spreading her hands wide to the blaze she looked at him over her shoulder, laughing teasingly. He had the letter in his hands still unopened. "Why," she cried, "what an extraordinary sight! You haven't opened it!"

"No," he answered, turning it over, "I haven't."

"I've always heard that curiosity was a feminine weakness but I never

knew till now," she said. "Please go on and read it, because if you don't I'll feel that I'm preventing you and I'll have to go up stairs to my own room, which is as cold as a refrigerator. Don't make me polite and considerate against my will."

Without answering her he tore open the letter and, moving to the light of the window, held the sheet up and began to read.

There was silence for some minutes. The fire sputtered and snapped, and once or twice the crisp paper rustled in Dominick's hands. Rose held her fingers out to the warmth, studying them with her head on one side as if she had never seen them before. Presently she slid noiselessly out of her coat, and dropped it, a heap of silky fur, on a chair beside her. The movement made it convenient to steal a glance at the young man. He was reading the letter, his body close against the window-pane, his face full of frowning, almost fierce concentration. She turned back to the fire and made small, surreptitious smoothings and jerks of arrangement at her collar, her belt, her skirt. Dominick turned the paper and there was something aggressive in the crackling of the thin, dry sheet.

"Perley got a letter from your mother," she said suddenly, "that he was reading in a corner of the post-office, and it nearly made him cry."

There was no answer. She waited for a space and then said, projecting the remark into the heart of the fire. "Yours must be a most interesting letter."

She heard him move and looked quickly back at him, her face all gray challenge. It was met by a look so somber that her expression changed as if she had received a check to her gaiety as unexpected and effectual as a blow. She shrank a little as he came toward her, the letter in his hand.

"It is an interesting letter," he said. "It's from my wife."

Since those first days of his illness, his wife's name had been rarely mentioned. Rose thought it was because young Mrs. Ryan was a delicate subject best left alone; Dominick, because anything that reminded him of Berny was painful. But the truth was that, from the first, the wife had loomed before them as a figure of dread, a specter whose presence congealed the something exquisite and uplifting each felt in the other's heart. Now, love awakened, forcing itself upon their recognition, her name came up between them, chilling and grim as the image of death intruding suddenly into the joyous presence of the living.

The change that had come over the interview all in a moment was startling. Suddenly it seemed lifted from the plane of every-day converse to a level where the truth was an obligation and the language of polite subterfuge could not exist. But the woman, who hides and protects herself with these shields, made an effort to keep it in the old accustomed place.

"Is—Is—she well?" she stammered, framing the regulation words almost unconsciously.

"She's well," he answered, "she's very well. She wants me to come home."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Country Without Manufactures.

Panama has practically no manufactures. The principal exports are bananas, coconuts, hides and skins, ivory, nuts, rubber and hardwood, of which the United States receives the greater portion. More than half of the imports are furnished by the United States and consist chiefly of foodstuffs, textiles and hardware.

strength, dictating the law. Perhaps the human female so delights in this particular opportunity for tyranny because it is one of her few chances for indulging her passion for authority.

Rose, if she did not quite revel in it, discreetly enjoyed her period of dominance. In the beginning Dominick had been not a man but a patient—about the same to her as the doll is to the little girl. Then when he began to get better, and the man rose, tingling with renewed life, from the ashes of the patient, she quickly fell back into the old position. With the inherited, dainty deceptiveness of generations of women, who, while they

family mending, and the doctor all snowy from his rounds. The audience for Rose's readings had expanded from the original listener to this choice circle of Antelope's elect. The book chosen had been "Great Expectations," and the spell of that greatest tale of a great romancer fell on the snow-bound group and held them entranced and motionless round the friendly hearth.

The young man's eyes passed from face to face, avoiding only that of the reader bent over the lamp-illuminated page. The old judge, sunk comfortably into the depths of his arm-chair, listened, and cracked the

"I don't agree with you at all, Mr. Buford."

Buford had found Miss Cannon one of the most amiable and charming ladies he had ever met, and it was therefore a good deal of a surprise to have her turn upon him a face of cold, reproving disagreement, and remark in a voice that matched it:

"I don't agree with you at all, Mr. Buford, and you seem quite to forget that Mr. Ryan has been very sick and is still in great pain."

Buford was exceedingly abashed. He would not have offended Miss Cannon for anything in the world, and it seemed to him that a being so compact of graciousness and consideration would be the first to censure an exhibition of ill-humor such as young Ryan had just made. He stammered an apologetic sentence and it did not add to his comfort to see that she was not entirely mollified by it and to feel that she exhaled a slight, disapproving coldness that put him

Buford ran out of the room, and Rose somewhat timidly drew near the young man, braced against the table, his eyes down-bent, his face hard in the struggle with sudden and unfamiliar pain.

"Can't I help you?" she said. "Perley may not be there. Mr. Buford and I can get you up stairs."

"Oh, no," he answered, his words short but his tone more conciliatory. "It's nothing to bother about. I'd have wrung that man's neck if I'd had to listen to him five minutes longer."

Here Perley and Buford entered, and the former, offering his support to the invalid, led him hobbling out of the door into the hall. The actor looked after them for a moment and then came back to the fire where Miss Cannon was standing, thoughtfully regarding the burning logs.

"I've no doubt," he said, "that young Mr. Ryan is an estimable gentleman, but he certainly appears to be possessed by a very impatient and ugly temper."

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He Was Reading the Letter, His Body Close Against the Window-Pane.



"I Don't Agree With You at All, Mr. Buford."