

DOUBLE DICK AND JOE;

The Poorhouse Waifs.

BY DAVID LOWRY.

CHAPTER XVI.

LADY MORFORD.

Jeremiah Jenks directed the driver of the cab to take him speedily to a fashionable quarter of the city.

In less than half an hour he was set down in front of a fine-looking mansion. A model of a servant admitted the lawyer, and after seating him in the drawing-room took his card to his mistress.

A very handsome lady entered presently—a lady whose manner and dress indicated high social position.

She looked at Jeremiah inquiringly. The lawyer fumbled, rose, stammered and managed to say: "This is an unexpected visit, but I had no other alternative."

The lady looked at him, but did not speak. She was giving all attention to him.

"Madame—Lady Morford, I mean—I am the victim of misplaced confidence."

Still she did not speak. A slight elevation of her finely arched eye-brows, the lady gave no sign.

"I relied upon my nephew, Lady Morford, and he has deceived me, grossly deceived me."

"In what manner does it concern me, Mr. Jenks?"

"It does—yes, very much. He has possessed himself of my private correspondence—indeed he has acted shamefully!"

"Ah! I sympathize with you, sir; but unless it affects me immediately I do not see that I should be informed of a matter that affects you in a business and domestic way."

This was said in an icy manner that made Jeremiah Jenks' task all the more difficult, but he returned to the self-imposed charge.

"My how has I regret to state, made use of the knowledge he discovered in your letters, to deceive me—us both—in regard to the whereabouts of your granddaughter."

Lady Morford looked at him sharply, then she said in measured tones:

"How long, Mr. Jenks, has this deception been practiced?"

"Three months, at least."

"When did you discover the truth?"

"Within this hour."

Lady Morford was silent. She evidently awaited further revelations. Jerem'ah Jenks rose, paced the floor, and said in a humble fashion, very humbly, indeed:

"Of course I discovered from my nephew that your granddaughter—or the person I have reasons to believe to be your granddaughter—is not far from here."

"In New York?"

Lady Morford advanced quickly toward the attorney and said, in a tone revealing deep emotion, "Unless, sir, you are prepared now—instantly—to take me to her, I will not listen to any communication you may have to make to me. Once for all, Mr. Jenks, I have done with suppositions and theories. I want something tangible. I have been a prey to misapprehensions, have been induced to think many things that I find not a shadow of reason for now."

"I am prepared to go with you—to go now, Lady Morford. But—"

"Then keep what you have to say for me on the way."

She hastened from the room, and in a surprisingly short time stood before him with her bonnet on.

"My carriage will be at the door in two minutes. Now, proceed. Tell me where we are going."

"To Monsieur Dufaur's academy."

"I know it very well. I called there with an acquaintance only yesterday."

"Well, that is where we will find the girl I have been seeking."

"And how long has she been there?"

"Several moments, it seems."

"Months! Monks in New York! We may have passed each other—I might have sat here while she was dying near me! This is unpardonable!"

"It is, my lady, it is."

"Here is the carriage—quick, I must not lose another minute. Every moment is precious to me."

She was like a girl in her eagerness. When they were seated face to face—Jenks had sent his cab away—the lawyer related, with much humility, his bad nephew, had misled him and robbed him of an immense amount of money. But he could not take stock again of his flesh and blood—he revolted from even the contemplation of action against his nephew.

Of course Lady Morford applauded his spirit, and now that she was on the eve of embracing a grandchild, she felt as if she ought to exercise charity to all the world.

She heard all Mr. Jenks had to say, and pitied him, poor man.

Was he quite sure this young person was the identical child he had been searching for so long, and were the facts such as would satisfy the curious world that she was truly Lady Morford's grandchild?

"Because," said Lady Morford, "unless the proof is convincing my nephew, who is deeply interested, will contest the claim now and after I am dead. He will leave no one behind that inequality can suggest or money accomplish."

"I am awaiting Lady Morford, that the girl's birth—all the evidence required—will be supplied."

"Are we not there yet?" said the grandmother.

"We will soon be there now. One more block, Lady Morford."

When the carriage stopped and the footman opened the door, Lady Morford, whose hand trembled, said as she laid it on Mr. Jenks' arm:

"Pray be quick—let me get it over speedily, this meeting."

"I desire to see Madame Dufaur," said the lawyer to the servant who answered her a lady wa's."

"Monsieur Dufaur is absent, too."

"When will Madame Dufaur return?" inquired Lady Morford, anxiously.

"In an hour."

"And monsieur?"

"I don't know; he may be later."

"Can I see—" The lady turned to Mr. Jenks. "Her name?"

"I do not know; they call her Joe, I believe."

"Then can we see the young lady who is with Madame Dufaur—Miss Joe?"

"I am sorry to say, madame, she, too, is out."

"She is out of the city?"

Now, the servant thought the visitor meant in the neighborhood of the city, as if Joe was out of town for an hour or two, and she answered:

"Indeed, I am not sure. Maybe she is."

Lady Morford spoke to Mr. Jenks again.

"I will leave a note."

"Whatever you may deem proper under the circumstances."

Lady Morford called for paper, pen and ink; then she wrote a few lines in a nervous hand, placed the note in an envelope, handed it to the servant, and turned to her companion.

"I can do no more at present." "No. We have done all that can be done now."

"If she does not call on me—I will return. She will surely call—or send me word."

"I surely such a note as that will be attended to promptly."

The visitors retired, and the servant looked after them curiously.

As she looked, a handsome young man came up the street. He had waxed mustaches, black eyes, and a military air. He was the leader of a brass band—and the girl's lover.

He stopped, took off his hat, and talked to her. She smiled, and talked to and at him with her brilliant eyes. They were to be married soon, so it was not much wonder five, ten minutes passed away.

Then the young man looked at his watch, gave a start, and exclaimed: "Pardon! I'm off."

The servant sighed, remembered certain things such as that, and the servant entered the house with a little cry of distress, and the girl, which was in her pocket, and which Lady Morford had placed in her hand with a solemn injunction, was as utterly forgotten as if it had never been handed her to give to her mistress "the moment she returned."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ANOTHER SURPRISE.

When Monsieur Dufaur and his wife, accompanied by Job Wonder, Dick, Ben Brown and his wife, returned to the Dufaur mansion, there was much rejoicing, much to be explained, and much more that nobody could account for.

"What is in the name of all that's mysterious did that sound mean by pronouncing he was married?" said the clown.

He appeared to think the question open one, for anyone to answer who could satisfy him.

"I know that, I reckon."

Everybody looked at Job.

"There's a long story hings to that there—I'll cut it right short, an' say this fellow's in the office of a cute lawyer hyer, who's got his eyes on Joe hyer."

"A lawyer? What does a lawyer want with Josephine?" demanded Monsieur Dufaur.

"Well, that's what I hain't found out yet, but I will. I'll just make it my business to find out. Anyhow, he wanted me to pay him a lot of money for keeping a sharp lookout on Joe, hyer an' all."

"He was—what? I'll right it close. At least he did so. There was money in it somehow—or that pesky lawyer wouldn't bothered none—lawyers don't waste no time 'bout they git paid for," in blamed well paid."

"Well—but," said Madame Dufaur.

"Joe has no hobby—not a friend in the whole wide world! And no money—then why should that villain swear he was her husband!" exclaimed Madame Dufaur.

"There's some reason for it," said Ben Brown reflecting. "Perhaps Joe is a real live hellress."

"You would make a beautiful hellress," said Mrs. Brown.

"She is a beauty, any way you take her," said Job.

"Come on," said Monsieur Dufaur, "you will spoil her! Joe don't let anyt'ing they say spoil her."

"No, she won't," said the clown laughing.

"Talking 'bout that," Job began laughing, when a sharp peal at the bell startled them.

A servant went to the door. The drawing-room door was opened. All in it could hear what passed in the hall.

"Pray tell Madame Dufaur I desire to speak to her."

"O! ma'm," the servant exclaimed hastily.

"Then followed some words in a low, passionate tone. Then the strange voice answered.

"Then keep what you have to say for us now," Dick said to himself, as he fell asleep.

Lady Morford turned to him with a smile.

"I would like to speak with you again, Mr. Wonder, concerning some affairs."

"Glad to be of use to you, mum—specially if I can keep you out of that lawyer's clutches, or help put his nephew in the penitentiary, where he is headin' now, an' noth'kin' kin stop him."

Mother Camp coughed.

"Dicky Dick! O, well, why do you want to know?"

"Cos I'm his friend, and this lady is, too."

"Why—whisper. His father died of the tremens—right here. And they say Dicky's uncle is living, and is worth hundreds of thousands. But it don't belong to the uncle. That's why Zeke Caper tried to kill him; he beat him and starved him, but the boy ran away. He is."

"Here he is, madam."

Poor Dick blushed scarlet as Lady Morford caught his hand in hers and said:

"You are made of the stuff heroes are made of, my boy."

"You'd think so if you saw him bring Black and Firefly to time," said the clown proudly.

"He understands horses, then?"

"Well, I've seen men who thought they knew it all, and Dick there knows more than they know—or at least he can do more."

"It's new strange it all seems," said Lady Morford. "Well, we have you now. You need rest. Now you understand why I could not sleep. I had to come."

Then kissing her granddaughter—she did not permit herself to doubt longer—she spoke apart to Madame Dufaur, bade the others good-night, and withdrew. In a few moments they heard her carriage rolling away home.

"She looks like one of the high folks in the pictures we see," said Job, when they were speaking of her.

"High! So she is," said Monsieur Dufaur.

"How—why? She belongs to the nobility."

"High! So she is," said Monsieur Dufaur.

"How—why? She calls herself Howson," said the clown.

"Exactly; but she is an earl's daughter, and immensely wealthy at that. She is called English Lady Morford."

"What?" exclaimed Madame Dufaur, kissing Joe. "You are a born lady—an earl's daughter. How glad I am. Yes—"

"She is a real lady, for she called to-day to ask me to bring Joe to her. She left a very important note with Maria, and Maria has forgotten it; and Lady Morford made me promise not to tell the poor girl. Had I received the note she would not have been compelled to come in the dead of the night; but she could not stay away longer, she said."

"That was very kind: it shows breeding," said Monsieur Dufaur.

"But how do we know you really are her granddaughter?" said Ben Brown, looking at Joe.

"How—how—why, you can see, they look so much alike," said Madame Dufaur.

"Ah, but in matters of the kind we don't go by looks. I don't doubt it; I only want to prove it to all the world."

All looked at Job Wonder.

"There's a woman in Barnesville poorhouse. She said Joe was rich—came of rich people. Yes; she told me that, and that she knew more. I thought she was making a fool of me, dod-blast her, she wasn't."

"It was old Mother Camp," said Joe.

"Yes, exactly; that's her name. I'm goin' right back to Mother Camp, and I find out all she knows for five dollars—go to-morrow to see her again."

"Meantime, wonder here will show you all where to sleep for the remainder of the night," said Monsieur Dufaur.

Whereupon they separated, and soon the inmates of Madame Dufaur's domain were wrapped in sleep.

Dick was the last to close his eyes. And then—al! there were tears in them, for was not Joe—his playmate, Joe—lady, rich, and to become great, while who was he? What was he?"

"The way's all clear for us," said Brown to Wonder.

"How would it do to let me write a little letter to my Uncle Israel," said Dick.

"Good!" said Ben.

Dick wrote just two lines to the effect that he was about to proceed against his uncle and Zeka Caper.

When Israel Heber received the little letter, he selected a stout rope, and the next day the papers published an account of the rich merchant's mysterious suicide.

A day later Zeka Caper stole away from Barnesville in disguise, westward bound, but Providence had marked a different course for him. A collision took place a short distance from Barnesville, and Zeka Caper was the only passenger.

There was a freight train wrecked on the Monon one mile below Orleans and seven miles south of Mitchell, which resulted in derailing and piling up ten freight cars with heavy loss.

During the past two weeks, Peter Mauer, having six children and a wife, was taken to New York to verify Mother Camp's statements.

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