

# *Cash and Carrie*

Leslie Gordon  
Barnard

Illustrated by  
C. F. Peters

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# CASH AND CARRIE

By LESLIE GORDON BARNARD

*Author of "Mrs. Moore Entertains," "Shadows," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY C. F. PETERS

“**L**ook ye, Peggy girl—I’m blind as ould Missus Murphy if he aint stickin’ bits o’ brown paper, no less, all over his front windeys, tellin’ lies about what’s to be had inside!”

Old Jerry Nolan removed his favorite pipe from its accustomed place, and spat disgustedly on the sidewalk in defiance of city by-law number 439 forbidding the practice.

He was standing, ready aproned against the coming of the day’s trade, in the doorway of his little corner shop that for a generation had held the trade—steady and transient—of a rather over-populous neighborhood.

Within the shop the sound of a cheerful song ceased, and a vision of workaday attractiveness ranged up alongside Jerry’s burly form, one plump arm, bare well above the elbow, linking into his.

“Where, Daddy?”

The question was superfluous: Peggy knew very well about the newly-opened shop on the opposite corner. Only last night, on the way home from the movies with Carrie Blundsell, she had come by on that side so as to look within. The lights were all on even then—bright, attractive lights, arranged so as to show off the store and stock to best effect. The goodly smell of fresh paint pervaded everything—until you began to wonder whether the groceries themselves wouldn’t partake of a flavor of turpentine. Peggy had stared quite rudely, until the young man, working with shirt-sleeved energy inside, had happened to turn and catch her glance. This circumstance did not lessen her interest in the opposite side of the street now.

“A blasted young upstart!” sputtered Jerry, with malice; “not old enough yet to be growin’ hair on his face let alone runnin’ a grocery store. What’s them signs say, Peggy? Your eyes are better’n mine.”



*“A blasted young upstart!” sputtered Jerry.*

This was a pleasant fiction; there was little the matter with Jerry Nolan's sight save that it lacked training in identifying any but the most elementary words. Her father's poor sight necessitated Peggy making out all the accounts, and taking charge of the general clerical work.

Peggy began reading;

"Tomatoes—fresh to-day—Cash and Carry price 28c lb."

"Stay," said Jerry, scratching his head perplexedly with the pudgy forefinger of his left hand, "let me get that 'Cash an' Carry price'—now what the divil does he mean by that?"

"It's quite the thing now, Daddy, for folks to be carrying home their own parcels under their arms. That's the carry part—the cash is simply that they pay cash for everything."

"Um!" Old Jerry sucked hard at his pipe. "Ye don't say now. 'Tis meself cud stand it if folks ud all pay cash instead o' lavin' their accounts run as long as they do. The carry part's different—most av our folks do it annyhow, but cash—um!" He chuckled softly. "He'll niver do it, though, I'm thinkin'. He's run up agin somethin' now, Peggy, wid an' old established place right forninst him, givin' accommodation regular to all but the fly-by-nights. They'll not quickly quit Nolan's after all these years."

The early rush of shop- and factory-bound workers had already passed along the street. Now the first shoppers began to put in an appearance, bags on arms. Most of those passing by Nolan's nodded a morning greeting to old Jerry. He was a sort of land-mark. Jerry responded contentedly. This was his district: he knew these people; they knew him—Peggy, reading his thoughts, wondered within herself, mentally contrasting the sparkling attractions of the new store and the unkempt pokiness of their own shop. Her father had always resented any suggestion of change. Nolan's Grocery was an institution—a tradition—the neighborhood might change but not Nolan's.

"Here comes Mrs. Finnigan!" Peggy's words heralded the approach of a substantial personage, whose large family made equally substantial orders of supplies a daily necessity. Finnigan had a good job too, and paid his accounts regularly monthly. The woman paused before crossing the street, reading the signs pasted on the plate glass window of the "Cash and Carry Store." She hesitated a moment, stared across the street, hesitated again, and,

consulting the contents of her purse, nodded her decision and succumbed to the temptation. Jerry's pipe came from between his teeth with a jerk.

"She—she's gone in!" he announced, at a loss for his usual expletives. "Well! I'm—I'm—"

Later he watched Mrs. Finnigan come out, burdened with her purchases, and pass on with barely a glance across at "Nolan's." Jerry said nothing, but his teeth worried his pipe stem savagely, and the look on his face went right to Peggy's heart. A sudden flare against the intruder sprang up within her.

"I hate him—hate him! 'Tis a shame he should come here spoiling business for folks who've been on the ground long before. Why couldn't he have gone somewhere else, instead of right forninst us? It's an insult, that's what it is!" A suggestion of tears was in her voice; her eyes, regarding the personable young man in the doorway opposite, smouldered resentment. Suddenly she gave a little cry and shrank back into the store.

"What's up, Peggy?"

"Nothing," retorted Peggy, "only he was looking straight over at me."

"A cat," declared Jerry oracularly, "may look at a king, they do say."

"Maybe now," said Peggy to herself more than to her father, "he didn't see me well—it's kinda dark in the doorway here."

Later, inside the shop, Peggy faced a long, cracked pier glass, that decency demanded should be sent to the dust heap and tradition forbade touching.

"Well, 'tis a sight you are at that, Peggy Nolan, with your skirt pinned up and your hair like Mrs. Rafferty's on washday—even if it is but eight in the morning. Maybe though," she reiterated hopefully—"he didn't see me well—it was really dark in the doorway there."

**I**t was not until the next afternoon that Peggy, perched on a high stool that brought the accounts desk within reach, looked up to find a pair of dark eyes staring almost rudely into her surprised gray ones. Habit prompted her to extend a hand towards the wicket to receive the cash that was always expected from any but the "regulars." The young man shook his head amiably.

"Nothing doing," he said. "This happens to be a social call, you see. I'd have been around sooner if I'd known you were here. Anyway I've been

horribly busy and, well, business is business, you know.”

There was a pleasing ingenuousness about this young man that was disarming. But Peggy’s head was elevated a trifle, chin upward.

“Exactly, Mr. Duxberry, and if you’ll excuse me, it’s my business hours you’re interfering with now.”

“So? What’s the big idea? Old Tithereye there won’t mind”—the speaker shot a glance at the lanky assistant behind the counter, in evident amusement at his awkward movements and ungainly person—“and I saw the fat little old boss go out a few moments ago, all togged up to the nines, so I figured he must have gone uptown.”

A combination of resentment and mischief sparkled in Peggy’s eyes.

“You see,” she told him, “if you’d remembered my name, Mr. Duxberry, you’d know that the fat little old boss happens to be—my father!”

Young Mr. Duxberry was duly contrite.

“I’m sorry,” he said, “my mistake. I—I trust I haven’t taken liberties with another relative”—his eyes roved again to Clem, the assistant. “No? I thought not. Nature would never be so obviously unfair in the distribution of looks to one family.”

**A** wave of color began to augment the natural freshness of the girl’s face. She was angry and intrigued at the same time. Likewise, she was determined to put this young man in his place and not altogether sure that she wanted him to stay put! But he was rambling on:

“I’ve been out West, you see, ever since the famous picnic—gee, do you remember that day? And the way the boys grouched because I—a stranger, a rank outsider, a man from nowhere—monopolized Miss Peggy. Do you know I never thought of you by any other name than that.”

Peggy committed absent-minded ravages on a dogeared ledger, but kept silence.

“Will you ever forget the boat trip? And the eventful landing, when Jimmy Bride lost his head and the rest of us our balance, and upset the bunch in the shallow, muddy water, and I did an acrobatic stunt and kept you—or most of you at least—high and dry—with you screeching and kicking to be let down into the water like the others. Do you know it would have served you right if I’d dropped you kerplunk in?”

Peggy covered her blushes with laughter. The remembrance was strong upon her—many times in these months she had thought of it, recalling the gentle strength of the man. Every time, indeed, that she had gone up to Williard's Wholesale Emporium she had wondered if she might not run across him again in town on one of his buying trips. She knew he had a store in the country somewhere, but would never give herself away by asking about him. The United Grocers' Association Picnic had begun and ended that incident. Peggy found the steady glance of those dark eyes embarrassing now.

“I—I lost my purse as it was,” she said, more for the sake of saying something than that the trifling loss involved mattered.

“And I lost my—” he stopped, smiling at her, but some of the mischief was gone from his smile now. She evaded his glance.

“Look, Miss Peggy,” he said, eagerly, “let's go off for a bit of a jaunt next Sunday afternoon. How about it?”

Peggy hesitated.

“Quick,” he said, “there's a whole tribe heading into my place. I must get back. They're rather short-handed still.”



*“Look, Miss Peggy, let’s go off for a bit of a jaunt next Sunday afternoon.”*

**P**eggy looked across the street. Business seemed brisk over there. Some were coming out with parcels, others admiring the window display or passing in to buy. A quick anger seized her, tinged with the thought that she was like one who parleys with the enemy while the commander is away. A traitor in the camp of her father. Her lip curled a trifle.

“If I were you,” she said, “I’d be getting back to my store and not be bothering folks whose throats you’re trying to cut in business.”

Young Mr. Duxberry suffered a moment of confusion.

“Aw, heck,” he said, “forget it, Miss Peggy. I never thought of that kind of thing. This happens to be the corner where all the motors turn to go to Glendale and Rosehill, so it just suited my purpose. Look, I’ll call for you at three sharp.”

Peggy’s anger was already subsiding quickly, as it always did, like a summer storm. When a sense of humor struggles with it, anger can never linger long. The consummate audacity of the man!

“Besides,” she temporized, “I was going out with Carrie Blundsell.”

“Good. Bring her along and we’ll make a foursome. I’ll fetch Ted Dixon along, too. You remember Ted, of course?”

“But—but—I’m not going with you. I told you—”

Young Mr. Duxberry was half way to the door.

“At three sharp,” he said. “I’ll be there with bells on.”

From the doorway Peggy signalled the retreating form frantically.

“Don’t—come—to—the—house,” she called. “I’ll—meet—you—at—the corner—on—account—of—of—the—fat little—old boss!”

A single swallow does not make a summer nor a single meeting a courtship, but when spring heralds the early bird you suspect summer is on the way, and when mutual interest rises sufficiently above prejudicial circumstances for two young people to meet surreptitiously you may look for developments. Add to the mixture the ingredient of parental opposition and you have supplied the necessary spice.

Not that old Jerry was made aware of the details of the affair. Surreptition entered into it enough to mask the mutual interest of the two.

“’Tis ashamed ye shud be to be foriver runnin’ over to that young upstart’s place,” Jerry would grumble. “Since that Carrie girl got a job with him I’m thinkin’ ye spend half yer toime over there. Can’t ye see enough av her outside business hours without foriver traipsin’ over there?”

Peggy did not feel it incumbent upon her to explain that there were other attractions any more than she felt called upon to tell how when the young folk of the neighborhood—the congenial group of her own circle—went off to the movies or for an outing, it seemed the natural thing for her to pair off with Bud Duxberry.

When her father spoke of Bud—and the subject seemed to be increasingly on his mind—Peggy maintained a discreet silence. Her father’s antipathy was a natural thing; she sympathized fully, yet more and more she felt incensed that he should be so stubborn in clinging to traditional customs of trade. It is not always easy for the eyes of youth to see from the angle of vision of age; to realize how hard it is to quickly change the habits of a lifetime. Jerry would not concede a grain of approbation to the up-to-date methods of his competitor; nor learn by them. When Peggy, for instance, broached the subject of window displays, hinting that she could do as well as Bud Duxberry if given a chance, he snapped out:

“If it busts me I’ll not be apin’ annyone like that young fool. Give him enough rope an’ he’ll hang himself, as they say.”

It was only when, to Bud’s growing slice of the neighborhood trade—a thing that cut seriously into the volume of sales at Nolan’s—there was added a steadily swelling stream of outside patrons, that Jerry voiced an unwilling concession. This was one evening in September.

“How the divil that boy gets them swells to come along in their cars an’ buy his stuff by the cartload, no less, beats me. I’ll not be sayin’ his prices aint low—he’s cuttin’ the heart out o’ things. But I’ve met his figures.”

From her seat at the desk Peggy made answer, the store being empty of customers at the time. She held out a newspaper.

“Look at the way he advertises,” she said.

“Read it to me,” commanded Jerry, “I left me glasses upstairs.”

Peggy read the catchily worded announcement, directed particularly to the residents of the substantial Glendale and Rosehill suburbs.

“**H**e goes gunning for them,” she of stopping in on the way home from the city to get their stuff. You’ve got to get busy to catch the trade these days. Carrie says there are all kinds of swells deal there regular now. We’ll never get anywhere by sitting here waiting for something to turn up. Bud—Mr. Duxberry’s—a live wire anyhow.”

“Um!” Jerry was non-committal. “Since when,” he asked presently, “did Peggy Nolan start standin’ up for her father’s competitor against her own flesh and blood?”

Peggy took refuge in silence, the hot blood mantling cheeks and temples. Finally she ventured:

“I only said he was a live wire—and he is too. We’re on the way to the scrap heap over here.”

Jerry grunted, relapsing into silence. A quarter of an hour later he still sat there, sucking hard at his pipe, every now and then shaking his head thoughtfully. Somehow he looked very old and grey, so that Peggy slipped over, when occasion served, and kissed him. Her heart was too full for words. For the time even Bud suffered complete exclusion. For the rest of the afternoon Peggy’s conscience was annoyingly active.

If only her father would meet Bud half way! Several times the young man had dropped over, anxious to supplement his stock, offering prices that would have meant to him a turnover at a dead level, but had met with repulse after repulse. Better that an over-stock should perish on the shelves! Singularly enough it was Jerry’s “stickers” that Bud always seemed to be in need of.

“It’s no good,” Bud told Peggy that night. “I’ve done my best. There’s business and to spare for us both if your Dad would only realize it and let me help. I’ve more than I can handle now. I was telling Carrie I’d have to be getting in more help still. She’s carrying too big a load herself, the little girl’s nerves are going to pieces.”

**P**eggy felt a sudden little prick of jealousy, and was immediately furiously angry with herself for it. Just because Bud seemed very solicitous of Carrie of late! It always affected her this way too when she saw Bud in confidential conversation with the girl behind the cash desk. Peggy never spoke of business to Bud; it did not seem just the thing to do under the circumstances.

They were walking home in the cool darkness. To-night the store closed early, as it did twice a week. Others of the usual group went on ahead, pairing off after the movies.

“Bud”—a mite of concern was in Peggy’s voice—“don’t you think you should see Daddy now about—about—us?”

Bud vented his feelings with something approaching a groan.

“I know, dear,” she said, “it’ll not be easy, but we’ve got to face it and—well—he won’t bite—or anything.”

After a moment’s silence he turned to her.

“Peggy—what if he should—refuse? Would you—”

“Why, I’d—” Peggy stopped. A quick tumult of emotions raced through her. Conscience had not altogether approved this surreptitious lovemaking already; now the thought of an open break with the man who had been the best of fathers to her, and almost a mother since the mother herself had gone on, brought a flood of revelation. “If he should refuse—” A vision of her father once roused against a person or thing came to her. He was violent in his likes and dislikes; worse still, to change him was like trying to mold metal once it had set and hardened. “If he should refuse—”

“I—I don’t know,” said Peggy slowly.

“Then wouldn’t it be better,” he said quickly, “not to chance it now, and go along, and perhaps—”

**S**he shook her head. Since this afternoon her mind had been made up. “I’m not—happy, Bud,” she said miserably. “No—not that—” as he looked his protest—“you’ve come to mean—everything that a girl looks for for happiness—only—well, I’m not playing square with Daddy—and I’ve always played square since I can remember. Bud, you will speak to-morrow, won’t you?”

Bud did not meet her glance. Finally he said, slowly:

“Yes, little girl, I’ll speak to-morrow night. Only I wish it wasn’t just now. I’ve other things worrying me.”

Silence held them both on the homeward way, but she clung to his arm a little more tightly as though she was afraid she might lose him.

At shortly after seven the next night Bud put in an appearance at Nolan’s Grocery. Anxiety enshrouded him. Peggy greeted him with a flushed face as he entered; from where he was busy serving behind the counter Clem gaped suspiciously at him. Peggy leaned forward to whisper.

“Bud—he’s upstairs. I thought perhaps—”

Young Duxberry’s brow crinkled.

“Upstairs— who?”

“Why, Dad, of course. He was tired so I got him settled with his pipe and his favorite records by the gramophone, and he’s safe for all evening.”

Bud’s clenched fist came down hard on the counter.

“Peggy—I—I—honest I forgot about that.”

“Forgot?—Bud!” Resentment and consternation mingled. As soon forget your wedding day, surely, as this!

“Look!” he said quickly. “I’m sorry, Peggy, but honest we’ll have to let it go to-night. I know I’ve got an awful nerve only I came over to see if you’d handle my cash for an hour or two. It’s Carrie’s night off, and I’ve got to slip out for a while myself. I’ll try and not be too long. It’s urgent or I wouldn’t think of asking you. You will—won’t you? Old Tithereye here can hold things down.”

Peggy’s reply came in dead, mechanical tones.

“I—suppose so,” she said, and threw a light wrap over her shoulders, spoke a word with Clem and went with Bud. When he tried to take her arm she withdrew from him. He shrugged his shoulders resignedly, thus throwing fresh fuel on the fire. Anyone worthy of his salt would have made a second attempt or known the reason why!

**W**hen, two hours later, the store closed, and Bud had failed to put in an appearance, Peggy made a weary and tearful return homeward. Nolan’s was, of course, closed too, but through the door she could glimpse a light burning in the back of the store and big Clem busy over some stock, shifting boxes and barrels, with ungainly movements that held nevertheless the suggestion of great reserves of strength. Clem was stronger physically than mentally.

Inside, the making of the day’s accounts awaited her; the heavy, odorous atmosphere was not enticing. She lingered outside in the cool, sweet evening air. Through the pleasant dusk young people passed and repassed, arm in arm. Laughter mingled with the low tones of confidential exchanges. A sense of loneliness—vague but keen—distressed the watching girl.

The door of the shop opened behind her, and closed. Clem came out, heading homeward, mumbling a farewell in passing. A few lengths away he turned, retracing his steps. He regarded her curiously, with that senseless, leering expression she had come to know and pity.

“I guess he’s good and mad,” said Clem, speaking quickly, as he always did once his stuttering tongue could gather momentum.

“Who’s mad, Clem?”

“Why, yer Dad.”

“Oh?”

Clem nodded, vacantly.

“An’ oughtta be, I guess,” he said, sagely.

“Go on, Clem,” she urged. “Tell me—what’s he mad about?”

“Why, what should he be mad about but your runnin’ off agen with that feller to-night? I don’t hold with no sich goin’s on myself.”

Peggy started.

“Did he—did he come down and find—?”

“Nope,” said Clem readily, and with conscious virtue. “I told him. Leavin’ everythin’ for one to handle, too. I don’t hold with no sich goin’s on at all. Oh, he’s good an’ mad right enough. He just got kinda red, an’ looked at me an’ laughed—but I don’t like to hear folks laugh—not like that—not when they’re all-fired mad. I thought you might like to know, you see. G’night.”



*His arm was around the girl's waist, holding her to him.*

**T**repidation came to Peggy. In her talk with Clem she had walked part way along the street with him. Well, she might as well return and face the music now. Things were all going wrong anyway to-night. If only Bud hadn't failed her!

Across the street a taxi drew up before a tenement house. It caught her attention partly because Carrie Blundsell boarded up there. A man and a girl got out; he dismissed the taxi. His arm was around the girl's waist, holding her to him. Peggy heard Carrie herself laugh titteringly. Light showed in the doorway; the door opened, admitting them to the area of illumination. Peggy stared, unbelieving. There was no mistaking that figure and profile. It was Bud Duxberry!

A little strangling choke gathered in Peggy's throat. She almost ran along the street and upstairs to her own home. The thought of facing her father's anger was almost welcome; anything now was better than quiet reflection. The sound of steady breathing and the suggestion of snores came from her father's room. She tiptoed downstairs to the store, and spent a half hour, quite tearlessly, over the day's accounts. But later, in the consolation of her own room, her pillow was wet and sleep was far from her.

The first Tuesday of each month was a day that Peggy looked forward to. Invariably on that day she would make her monthly trip down to the wholesale district—an hour's run into the hub of the city's commerce—to settle up accounts, and consult regarding matters of stock and supplies. Promptly at noon she would lunch at a great popular lunchroom, where the comings and goings of a mixed multitude provided endless entertainment. Six or seven in the evening would see her home again, thoroughly satisfied with the day's doings, and ready to enjoy the fact that Tuesday was early-closing night, and a matter of half-an-hour's work would complete her labors.

**T**he morning after the discovery of Bud's defection found her early astir after a sleepless night. The prospect of her monthly jaunt was not alluring, except as it held possibilities of temporary forgetfulness. Old Jerry was up already, going over the stock; he regarded her curiously, but, singularly enough, made no comment or accusation. Perhaps the look in her face gave immunity. Jerry, after all, was the best of fathers.

It was seven when she returned home. The store was just closing. By seven-thirty the accounts were completed and she retired upstairs to go over the day's doings, as usual, with her father. As a rule this was a time of

mutual refreshing. Peggy's ready wit made her recital a thing of joy, and Jerry looked forward to the monthly conference. To-night, though, she was silent on all but the essential details of business. Jerry watched her through narrowed lids, the lines of his face softening in sudden tenderness. They sat in the semi-gloom, old Jerry puffing away thoughtfully at his pipe. Later Peggy went down to gather up some papers she had left in the store. When she returned upstairs the sound of voices came to her sending a throb to her heart, and causing her to halt on the topmost step. Bud was talking to her father! Anger filled Peggy's heart—a curious kind of anger—bitter-sweet. The sheer nerve of the man—after last night! But then how could he know she knew of his affair with Carrie? A quick throb of exultation came with the thought of the rebuff that was coming. Yesterday she could have helped Bud prevail upon her father; to-night he would have to fight what would be a losing battle because he fought alone. She stayed there, listening. It seemed a legitimate enough eavesdropping.

**P**oor Bud was temporizing with many topics, touching on the weather, with pathetic earnestness, shifting into the condition of trade, and getting nowhere. His glance was on the doorway, expectantly. He was waiting for her aid. Something primitive—some desire for revenge stirred her to fresh exultation. This was his punishment.

“Look here, young man,” quoth old Jerry at last, aiming expertly at a conveniently-placed cuspidor, “just what is it yer after to-night? Maybe now ye'd like to be robbin' me av some more trade?”

Bud wiped a perspiring brow with his handkerchief.

“It's very hot to-night,” he explained.

“Is it?” said Jerry. “I was thinkin' meself a bit av a fire would do well for a frosty evenin'. Peggy said 'twas quite cold when she come in.”

Bud grasped eagerly at the cue.

“It's Peggy I wanted to see you about, sir. You see Peggy and I—that is I and Peggy—I mean—” He stopped, hopelessly tangled in embarrassment. Jerry's glance was relentless.

“You're meanin'?”

“Well, you see,”—Bud attempted feeble humor—“I'm afraid I'm going to try and rob you now of your—cashier. You see, mine's leaving and I—”

“They do say,” put in Jerry, “that the only way to keep a cook nowadays is to marry her. Maybe now yer thinkin’ it’s the same wid a cashier?” Jerry’s tone was gruff, but in the light of a flaring match applied to the bowl of his pipe a little glint of humor showed in the eyes.

Bud’s tongue discovered its function. He poured out a rapidly-sketched picture of his ambitions: to marry Peggy, to amalgamate the two stores, keeping their present locations, one handling the “cash and carry” end exclusively, the other the account trade—buying stock on more favorable terms—having the name Nolan and Duxberry with Jerry Nolan, Esq., as senior partner, and Bud doing most of the work.

Jerry sat forward in his chair, bellowing his wrath.

“Ye young upstart! What right have ye to be schemin’ away like this, dictatin’ terms to them as has been on the ground before ye saw the light av day? ’Tis a good whalin’ ye need. Oh, Peggy!”

**F**rom the top of the stairway Peggy answered the call; a strange Peggy of blazing eyes. Jerry began a brief résumé of the last few moments.

“I heard—” said Peggy shortly.

“The devil ye did, ye little minx! An’ what has Peggy Nolan to say on the matter?”

Peggy’s eyes met the expectant ones of the appealing Bud. For a moment the appeal in them shook her curiously. Then a sweeping bitterness carried all else away.

“I wouldn’t marry him if he had a store five times the size and was the only man on earth,” she said, head upflung.

Old Jerry’s jaw dropped.

“Well—I’ll be—I’ll be—” he stopped, shaking his head. “Bud, me boy, I’m thinkin’ we’ve both got our signals crossed as they say. An’ it was meself was thinkin’ of late,” added Jerry with a sigh, “that it ud be a grand stroke av business fer us all at that. Bud, me boy, when ye get as old as I am ye’ll have found that wimmen are not unloike fleas—ye can’t be knowin’ how they’re goin’ to jump next. Now I thought just a little opposition like from her father would help things along and—”

But Peggy, slamming into her own room, heard no more, but lay on her bed, staring long and tearlessly up into the darkness. She felt alone in the

world—even her father had conspired against her!

**A** blaze of anger will often sustain one in a moment of trial such as Peggy experienced, but its dying flames as frequently leave the dead ashes of despair.

So it was with Peggy. Occasionally the memory of Bud's defection fanned the dying flames, but only temporarily. She knew that she wanted Bud, with all his faults, but had taken the direct method of driving him towards Carrie.

Jerry, noting the white face and tired eyes, muttered: "'Tis past me altogether," and the girls hearing, found in this a statement of the case. It was past all of them now: the words spoken in the heat of anger last night irretrievable, if only for pride and shame's sake, the memory of the provocation too sharply delineated in her mind to permit the decision to be revocable.

Customers came and went—paying cash, settling accounts, straightening out discrepancies, leaving orders for the morrow's delivery—the regular monotonous round. Peggy welcomed them because they gave her something to occupy her mind, but the brightness of the day and the geniality of most of the good folk in their dealings seemed so far apart as to be unreal.

When the early evening rush was over, Old Jerry took Clem out behind the store to attend to the packing of some empties that were cluttering the narrow limits of the back area. Through the front window Peggy could see the passing crowds hurrying on their way to the movies or theatres, the sound of their purposeful footfalls ringing on the pavement, their carefree laughter coming to her ears. By and by the street lapsed into the quiet of comparative desertion.

A flood of loneliness sent Peggy's head down to be pillowed on her arms. She started presently as a hand touched her, looking up half-guiltily.

"You," she said, dully. "Carrie."

**T**he surge of feeling that came to her made Carrie's obvious nervousness hardly noticeable to Peggy. Her eye did take in, mechanically, the hatted and coated figure, the little satchel and grip she carried.

"I've come," said Carrie, "I've come to say—good-bye—Peggy."

Peggy regarded her through narrowed lids. Friendship—a friendship dating back to the days when they went to school together and shared each other’s girlish joys and sorrows—rose up now to claim a hearing in the face of present estrangement. It came to Peggy’s remembrance that not so long back a dying woman had pressed her hand closely, bidding her be a true friend to a little girl left alone in the world. And she had promised . . .

“Carrie”—the voice was a little uncertain—“where are you going? You never said—”

“Bud—hasn’t hinted anythin’ to you then? I—I asked him not to tell, but I thought he might have told you. Somehow, Peggy, I didn’t want that you should know. You see—I’m goin’ to be married, Peggy.”

Unreasoning terror gripped Peggy’s heart. She managed to articulate: “Then you—you and Bud—”

Carrie stared.

“Good Lord, no. Why, I thought you an’ he—”

Laughter came with the relief, a little hysterical outburst, during which Peggy mentally dubbed herself a fool for jumping to impossible conclusions. Had not Bud been around only last night to see her father after all? Not that it mattered now, anyhow. From the nightmare of her own tangled affairs she turned to Carrie’s.

“Kiss me good-bye, Peggy, dear. Harry’s due here any minute now, an’ we’ve got to hurry.”

“Carrie—who is he? Do I know him?”

“He’s just the grandest thing, Peggy, and fearfully handsome. He’s been comin’ in this last month buyin’ his supplies, an’ taken me out in his car a bit. There—don’t start preachin’ at me, Peggy, I can’t stand it. Bud butted in Monday night an’ brought me home quite hysterical. He thought we were plannin’ something like this. Peggy dear, I—I want you an’ Bud not to think too hard of me—afterwards. Harry’s in trouble, Peggy—some kind of financial trouble—an’ I’ve gotta help him out. We’re goin’ away to start things fresh. You know how it’d be with you, Peggy, if it was Bud.”

A dull weight was at Peggy’s heart. Her accusing eyes were on her friend’s face.

“Carrie—and you never told me a word about it. Maybe now you were ashamed. I thought all the time it was Ted.” It came to her that every word—every moment—counted now. All her own troubles were forgotten. “Carrie

—Carrie, dear, look me in the eyes and tell me, could you be facing your mother fair and square if she were—here now?”

**A** quiver shook Carrie’s lithe body; Peggy, coming swiftly from behind the counter, folded her in her embrace.

“Oh, Peggy, you’ve made me so unhappy and miserable!”

From the doorway a man’s voice spoke.

“Ready there, kiddo? We need to hustle. First thing you know that chap across the way’ll be butting in again, and you know what that means—now.” He came out of the shadow; perhaps because of preconceived prejudice Peggy did not care for his looks, for all that he was well-built, and darkly handsome.

Carrie looked up, her tear-stained face turned to his.

“Harry—I can’t—can’t go with you till I see Bud.”

“You—what?”

She clung to Peggy’s arm convulsively.

“Peggy,” she sobbed, “I love him—honest I do—but I can’t do it now. Harry—Harry—please don’t ask me.”

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said smoothly, “I didn’t bargain for a whimpering kid. Just hand over that bag to me and I’ll be off.”

Carrie stared at him for a single moment of disillusionment. Peggy, feeling her sway a little, held her close and caught the words:

“Don’t let him get the bag, Peggy. It’s money—I—I sort of borrowed it to help him out—it’s money—Bud’s money—” She crumpled in a little heap on the floor.

Peggy made a quick grab for the bag but the man flung her off, heading for the street. She was after him in a minute, crying the alarm. He dodged across the street, making for his car that was waiting around the corner. The few passers-by stared at them.—“Bud’s money.”—Peggy had eyes for nothing but the retreating figure.

“Look out there, you!” Someone near Peggy uttered a sharp cry of warning, a motor honked perilously near, Peggy felt the impact of a great blow and fell, rolling unconscious in the gutter.

Voices coming as from a distance reached Peggy’s consciousness faintly.

“Better, Peggy dear?” Against the flaring background of ceiling lights in the “Cash and Carry Store” the familiar outline of Bud’s head was growing more distinct. Other figures clustered around—Old Jerry supporting a very pale Carrie, Clem actually shedding tears down his homely countenance, a circle of others drawn by mixed motives of sympathy and curiosity.

“Bud”—a faint color stole into the white cheeks—“do you know you’ve got your arms around me—and everybody looking?”

“I’ll tell the world I have,” declared Bud huskily. “Just like the picnic, Peggy girl, and there’s none will pry me loose—except Peggy Nolan herself!”

Returning strength enabled her to reach up to make in his ear the whispered confession:

“Bud, dear, she’s very comfortable where she is.”

In the cosy office of the “Cash and Carry Store” four people remained long after the lights in the main store had been switched off.

Over in one corner old Jerry Nolan gave fatherly comfort to a deeply repentant Carrie.

“There—there,” he soothed, “you’re not the only wan that’s played the fool round these parts, I’m thinkin’. We all make mistakes, an’ the big thing, they do say, is niver to make the same mistake twice.”

Over beside the low sofa on which Peggy lay, little the worse for her experience save a number of painful bruises, Bud let the girl into the sequel.

“They caught the fellow and turned him over to me. I let him go after he confessed it was the only way out of it. The miserable bounder had the little girl infatuated. I’d been watching their affair and didn’t care for the looks of it. That’s why I butted in night before last. I guess you thought I was funny all right, but I sure was worried. The funny thing is I never thought to connect the cash shortages with him or Carrie, except that I fancied she was making mistakes owing to being so unstrung. You see, I fancied he was well off with his two cars and the rest of it. It seems he’s just a handy-man about a downtown garage. I imagine he had it fixed to get away with the car, too, to-night, so I’ve got it parked safely outside.”

Later old Jerry turned to remark, after some moments of brow-puckering concentration:

“**B**ud, me boy, I’m thinkin’ we ought maybe to get a new front put in the old store. It shud be done at wanst, too. I don’t believe in wastin’ good toime.”

Bud grinned, meeting Peggy’s up-raised eyes.

“Neither do I, Mr. Nolan. That’s just what I’ve been telling Peggy, so we’re planning to get away for a bit of a honeymoon next week.”

“Um! Ye don’t say so now. ’Tis well our friend Carrie decided to stay wid the ship. My eyes are not what they used to be for accounts an’ such loike. I’m thinkin’, though, the little girl’ll be terrible lonesome wid you both away.”

Bud grinned again.

“I’ve been kind of figuring,” he said, “on getting in a store manager to handle the main details. There’s a real chance for a live man, and I think I know where I can get one. I have a suspicion that Teddie Dixon’s rather favorable to the idea of cash and—Carrie.”

“Bud, dear,” put in Peggy admiringly, “you do think of everybody and everything, don’t you? You’re just a dear.”

Bud reached down, implanting a tender kiss in its rightful place.

“Have it your own way,” he said, “but just for the present at least I prefer to concentrate on Miss Peggy Nolan.”

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

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[The end of *Cash and Carrie* by Leslie Gordon Barnard]