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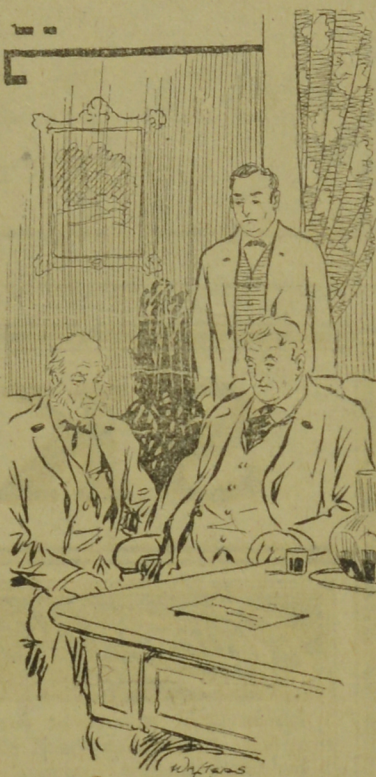
By **GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON**
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—In the New York home
of James Brood Dawes and Riggs, his
two old pensioners and comrades, await
the coming of Brood's son Frederic to
learn the contents of a wireless from
Brood, but Frederic, after reading,
throws it into the fire and leaves the
room without a word.

There had been deliberate purpose
in the methods of James Brood in so
far as this unhappy child was con-
cerned. When he cast out the mother
he set his hand heavily upon her fu-
ture. Fearing—even feeling—the in-
fernal certainty that this child was not
his own, he planned with machiavellian
instinct to hurt her to the limit of his
powers and to the end of her days.
He knew she would hunger for this
baby boy of hers, that her heart could
be broken through him, that her pun-
ishment could be made full and com-
plete. He sequestered the child in a
place where he could not be found,
and went his own way, grimly certain
that he was making her pay! She
died when Frederic was eight years
old, without having seen him again
after that dreadful hour when, protest-



The Patient Butler, Jones, Had Made
Four Visits to the Library.

ing her innocence, she had been
turned out into the night and told to
go whither she would but never to re-
turn to the house she had disgraced.
James Brood heard of her death
when in the heart of China, and he
was a haggard wreck for months
thereafter. He had worshiped this
beautiful Viennese. He could not
wreak vengeance upon a dead woman;
he could not hate a dead woman. He
had always loved her. A few years
after his return to New York he
brought her son back to the house
in lower Fifth avenue and tried, with
bitterness in his soul, to endure the
word "father" as it fell from lips to
which the term was strange.

The old men, they who sat by the
fire on this wind-swept night and
waited for the youth of twenty-two to
whom the blue missive was addressed,
knew the story of James Brood and
his wife Matilde and they knew that
the former had no love in his heart
for the youth who bore his name.
Their lips were sealed. Garrulous on
all other subjects, they were as silent
as the grave on this. They, too, were
constrained to hate the lad. He made
not the slightest pretense of appreciat-
ing their position in the household,
to him they were pensioners, no more,
no less; to him their deeds of valor
were offset by the deeds of his father;
there was nothing left over for a bal-
ance on that score. He was politely

considerate; he was even kindly dis-
posed toward their vagaries and
whims; he endured them because
there was nothing else left for him to
do. But, for all that, he despised
them—justifiably so, no doubt. If one
bears in mind the fact that they sig-
nified more to James Brood than did
his long-neglected son.

The cold reserve that extended to
the young man did not carry beyond
him in relation to any other member
of the household so far as James
Brood was concerned. The unhappy
boy, early in their acquaintance, came
to realize that there was little in com-
mon between him and the man he
called father. After a while the eager
light died out of his own eyes and he
no longer strove to encourage the in-
timate relations he had counted upon
as a part of the recompense for so
many years of separation and loneli-
ness. It required but little effort on
his part to meet his father's indiffer-
ence with a coldness quite as pro-

nounced; he had never known the
meaning of filial love; he had been
taught by word of mouth to love the
man he had never seen, and he had
learned as one learns astronomy—by
calculation. He hated the two old men
because his father loved them.

The patient butler, Jones, had made
no less than four visits to the library
since ten o'clock to awaken them and
pack them off to bed. Each time he
had been ordered away, once with the
joint admonition to "mind his own
business."

"But it is nearly midnight," protest-
ed Jones irritably, with a glance
at the almost empty decanter.

"Jones," said Danbury Dawes, with
great dignity and an eye that de-
ceived him to such a degree that he
could not for the life of him under-
stand why Jones was attending them
in pairs, "Jones, you ought to be in
bed—bed, d—n you—both of you. What
you mean, sir, by coming in—hic—
here this time o' night dis-turb-
ing—"

"You infernal ingrate," broke in M.
Riggs fiercely, "don't you dare to touch
that bottle, sir. Let it alone!"

"It's time you were in bed," pro-
nounced Jones, taking Mr. Dawes by
the arm. Mr. Dawes sagged heavily
in his chair and grinned triumphantly.
He was a short, very fat old man.

"Take him to bed, Jones," said Mr.
Riggs firmly. "He's drunk and—and
utterly useless at a time like this.
Take him along."

"Who the dev—hic—il are you, sir?"
demanded Mr. Dawes, regarding Mr.
Riggs as if he had never seen him
before.

"You are both drunk," said Jones
succinctly.

The heavy front door closed with a
bang at that instant and the sound of
footsteps came from the hall—a quick,
firm tread that had decision in it.
Jones cast a furtive nervous glance
over his shoulder.

"I'm sorry to have Mr. Frederic see
you like this," he said, biting his lip.
"He hates it so."

The two old men made a command-
able effort to stand erect, but no ef-
fort to stand alone. They linked
arms and stood shoulder to shoulder.
"Show him in," said Mr. Riggs, mag-
nificently.

"Now we'll find out wass in tele-
gram off briny deep," said Mr. Dawes,
sprawdling his legs a little farther
apart in order to declare a stanch
front.

"It's worth waiting up for," said Mr.
Riggs.

"Absolutely," said his staunch friend,
Frederic Brood appeared in the
door, stopping short just inside the
heavy curtains. There was a momen-
tary picture, such as a stage director
would have arranged. He was still
wearing his silk hat and top-coat, and
one glove had been halted in the
process of removal. Young Brood
stared at the group of three, a frank
stare of amazement. A crooked smile
came to his lips.

(To be Continued.)

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