Jane Cable

By George Barr McCutcheon

Author of "Beverly of Graustark," Etc.

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CHAPTER VIII—(Continued)

Miss Keating's anxiety was aroused. After a very long silence she took the reins into her own hands. "Is Mr. Briggs in trouble?" she asked at a venture. Mr. Briggs was the only client she could think of whose name began with a B.

Briggs? What Briggs?" asked Bobby, relighting his pipe for the fourth time.

"Why, our Mr. Briggs," answered Miss Keating curtly.

"I'm sure I don't know, Miss Keating. Has he been around lately?"

"I thought you were referring to him in that letter," she said succinctly.

"Oh, dear me, no; another party altogether, Miss Keating. Isn't the typewriter in working order this morning?" he asked, eying her machine innocently. She sniffed and started to reply, but thought better of it. Then she began pounding the keys briskly.

"It works like a charm," she shot back genially.

The letter that caused Bobby such perturbation came in the morning mail. His friend had laid bare some of the old stories concerning James Bansemer and cautioned him not to become involved in transactions with the former New Yorker. Harbert's statements were positive in character, and he seemed to know his case thoroughly well. While the charges as they came to Rigby were general, Harbert had said that he was quite ready to be specific.

All day long the letter hung like a cloud over young Mr. Rigby. He was to have lunched with Graydon and was much relieved when young Bansemer telephoned that he could not join him. Rigby found himself in a very uncomfortable position. If the stories from New York were true, even though he knew none of the inside facts, Graydon's father was pretty much of a scalawag, to say the least. He was not well acquainted with the lawyer, but he now recalled that he never had liked the man. Bansemer had impressed him from the beginning as heartless, designing, utterly unlike his clean hearted son.

Bobby loved Graydon Bansemer in the way that one man loves a true friend. He was certain that the son knew nothing of those shady transactions—if they really existed as Harbert painted them—but an exposure of the father would be a blow from which he could not recover.

It came at last to Rigby that he was not the only one in Chicago who held the secret. Other members of the bar had been warned long before the news came to him, and it was morally certain that if the facts were as bad as intimated the police also were in possession of them.

At the same time Rigby felt a certain moral responsibility involving himself. Bansemer at any time might apply his methods to people who were near and dear to him. The new intimacy with the Cables came to Bobby's mind. And then there were Clegg, Groll, the Semesons and others who might easily fall into the snare if James Bansemer set it for them.

Appreciating his responsibility in the matter, now that he was prepared to hear the worst of James Bansemer, Rigby's heart stood almost still. It meant that some day he might have to expose Graydon Bansemer's father. It meant that he might have to cruelly hurt his friend. It meant that he might lose a friendship that had been one of his best treasures since the good old college days. The mere fact that he would be compelled to watch and mistrust James Bansemer seemed like darkest treachery to Graydon, even though the son should not become aware of the situation.

Later in the afternoon Bobby went guiltily into a telegraph office and sent away a carefully worded dispatch. The answer came to him at the club that evening while he was playing billiards with young Bansemer, who even then was eager to be off to keep the promised appointment with pretty Miss Cable.

The telegram, which he opened while Graydon impatiently chalked his cue and waited for him to play, was brief and convincing. It read:

Watch him, by all means. He is not safe. My word for it. There is no mistake.

CHAPTER IX.

THE little room off the library was Jane's "den." Her father had a better name for it. He called it her "web," but only in secret conference. Graydon Bansemer lounged there in blissful contemplation of a roseate fate, all the more enjoyable because his very ease was the counterpoise of doubt and uncertainty. No word of love had passed between the mistress of the web and her loyal victim. But eyes and blood had translated the mysterious, voiceless language of the heart into the simplest of sentences. They loved and they knew it.

After leaving Rigby at the club Graydon drove to the north side, thrilled to the marrow with the prophecies of the night. His heart was in that little room off the library—and had been there for months. It was the abode of his thoughts. The stars out above the cold, glittering lake danced merrily for him as he whirled up the Drive. The white carpet of February crinkled and creaked with the chill of the air, but his heart was hot and safe and sure. He knew that she knew what he was coming for that night—the first kiss!

Jane's face was warm; her eyes had the tender glow of joy expectant; her voice was soft with the promise of coming surrender. Their hands met and clasped as she stood to welcome him in the red, seductive dimness of the little throneroom. His tall frame quivered; his lean, powerful, young face betrayed the hunger of his heart; his voice turned husky. It was not as he had planned. Her beauty—her mere presence—swept him past the preliminary fears and doubts. His handclasp tightened, and his face drew resistlessly to hers. Then their hands went suddenly cold.

"You know, don't you, Jane, darling?" he murmured.

"Yes," she answered after a moment softly, securely. He crushed her in his strong arms. All the world seemed to have closed in about her. Her eyes, suffused with happiness, looked sweetly into his until she closed them with the coming of the first kiss. "I love you—oh, I love you!" she whispered.

"I worship you, Jane!" he responded. "I have always worshiped you!"

It was all so natural, so normal. The love that had been silent from the first had spoken, that was all—had put into words its untold story.

"Jane, I am the proudest being in the world!" he said, neither knew how long afterward, for neither thought of time. They were sitting on the couch in the corner, their turbulent hearts at rest. "To think, after all, that such a beautiful being as you can be mine forever! It's—why, it's inconceivable!"

"You were sure of me all the time, Graydon," she remonstrated. "I tried to hide it, but I couldn't. You must have thought me a perfect fool all these months."

"You are very much mistaken, if you please. You did hide it so successfully at times that I was sick with uncertainty."

"Well, it's all over now," she smiled. And he sighed with a great relief.

"All over but the—the wedding," he said.

"Oh, that's a long way off. Let's not worry over that, Graydon."

"A long way off? Nonsense! I won't wait."

"Won't?"

"I should have said can't. Let's see. This is February. March, dearest?"

"Graydon, you are so much younger than I thought. A girl simply cannot be hurried through a—an engagement. Next winter."

"Next what? That's nearly a year, Jane. It's absurd! I'm ready."

"I know. It's mighty noble of you too. But I just can't, dearest. No one ever does."

"Don't—don't you think I'm prepared to take care of you?" he said, straightening up a bit.

She looked at his strong figure and into his earnest eyes and laughed so adorably that his resentment was only passing.

says that of you. I'm not afraid. I'm not thinking of that. It isn't the house I care for. It's the home. You must let me choose the day."

"I suppose it's customary," he said at last. "June is the month for brides, let me remind you."

"Before you came this evening I had decided on January next, but now I am willing to"—

"Oh, you decided before I came, eh?" laughingly.

"Certainly," she said unblushingly. "Just as you had decided on the early spring. But listen, dear. I am willing to say September of this year."

"One, two, three—seven months. They seem like years, Jane. You won't say June?"

"Please, please let me have some of the perquisites," she pleaded. "It hasn't seemed at all like a proposal. I've really been cheated of that, you must remember, dear. Let me say at least, as they all do, that I'll give you an answer in three days."

"Granted! I'll admit it wasn't the sort of proposal one reads about in novels"—

"But it was precisely as they are in real life, I'm sure. No one has a stereotyped proposal any more. The men always take it for granted and begin planning things before a girl can say no."

"Ah, I see it has happened to you," he said, jealous at once.

"Well, isn't that the way you do nowadays?" she demanded.

"A fellow has to feel reasonably sure, I dare say, before he takes a chance. No one wants to be refused, you know," he admitted. "Oh, by the way, I brought this—er—this ring up with me, Jane."

"You darling!" she cried as the ring slipped down over her finger. And then for the next hour they planned, and the future seemed a thousandfold brighter than the present, glorious as it was.

"You can't help succeeding," she repeated, "the same as your father has. Isn't he wonderful? Oh, Graydon, I'm so proud of you!" she cried enthusiastically.

"I can never be the man that the governor is," said Graydon loyally. "I couldn't be as big as father if I lived to be 126. He's the best ever! He's done everything for me, Jane," the son went on warmly. "Why, he even left dear old New York and came to Chicago for my sake, dear. It's the place for a young man, he says, and he gave up a great practice so that we might be here together. Of course he could succeed anywhere. Wasn't it bully of him to come to Chicago just—just for me?"

"Yes. Oh, if you'll only be as good looking as he is when you are fifty-five!" she said so plaintively that he laughed aloud. "You'll probably be very fat and very bald by that time."

"And very healthy, if that can make it seem more horrible to you," he added.

"I worship you, Jane!"

For some time he sat pondering while she stared reflectively into the fire opposite. Then, squaring his shoulders as if preparing for a trying task, he announced firmly: "I suppose I'd just as well see your father tonight, dearest. He likes me, I'm sure, and I—I don't think he'll refuse to let me have you. Do you?"

"My dad's just as fair as yours, Gray," she said, with a smile. "He's upstairs in his den. I'll go to mother. I know she'll be happy—oh, so happy!"

Bansemer found David Cable in his room upstairs, his smoking and thinking room, as he called it.

"Come in, Graydon. Don't stop to knock. How are you? Cigarette? Take a cigar, then. Bad night outside, isn't it?"

"Is it? I hadn't—er—noticed," said Graydon, dropping into a chair and nervously nipping the end from a cigar. "Have you been downtown?"

"Yes. Just got in a few minutes ago. The road expects to do a lot of work west this year, and I've been talking with the ways and means gentlemen—a polite and parliamentary way to put it."

"I suppose we'll all be congratulating you after the annual election, Mr. Cable?"

"Oh, that's just talk, my boy. Winemann is the logical man for president. But where is Jane?"

"She's—ah—downstairs, I think," said the tall young man, puffing vigorously. "I came up—er—to see you about Jane, Mr. Cable. I have asked her to be my wife, sir."

For a full minute the keen eyes of the older man, sharpened by strife and experience, looked straight into the earnest gray eyes of the young man who now stood across the room with his hand on the mantelpiece. Cable's cigar was held poised in his fingers, half way to his lips. Graydon Bansemer felt that the man aged a year in that brief moment.

"You know, Graydon, I love Jane myself," said Cable at last, arising slowly. His voice shook.

"I know, Mr. Cable. She is everything to you. And yet I have come to ask you to give her to me."

"It isn't that I have not suspected—aye, I [illegible]—what the outcome would be," said the other mechanically. "She will marry, I know. It is right that she should. It is right that she should marry you, my boy. You—you do love her?" He asked the question almost fiercely.

"With all my soul, Mr. Cable. She loves me. I don't know how to convince you that my whole life will be given to her happiness. I am sure I can"—

"I know. It's all right, my boy. It—it costs a good deal to let her go, but I'd rather give her to you than to any man I've ever known. I believe in you."

"Thank you, Mr. Cable," said Graydon Bansemer. Two strong hands clasped each other, and there was no mistaking the integrity of the grasp.

"But this is a matter in which Jane's mother is far more deeply concerned than I," added the older man. "She likes you, my boy. I know that to be true, but we must both abide by her wishes. If she has not retired"—

"Jane is with her, Mr. Cable. She knows by this time."

"She is coming." Mrs. Cable's light footsteps were heard crossing the hall, and an instant later Bansemer was holding open the den door for her to enter. He had a fleeting glimpse of Jane as that tall young woman turned down the stairway.

Frances Cable's face was white and drawn, and her eyes were wet. Her husband started forward as she extended her hand to him. He clasped them in his own and looked down into her face with the deepest tenderness and wistfulness in his own. Her body swayed suddenly, and his expression changed to one of surprise and alarm.

"Don't—don't mind, dear," he said hoarsely. "It had to come. Sit down, do. There. Good Lord, Frances, if you cry now I'll—I'll go all to smash!" He sat down abruptly on the arm of the big leather chair into which she had sunk limply. Something seemed to choke him, and his fingers went nervously to his collar. Before them stood the straight, strong figure of the man who was to have Jane forever.

Neither of them—nor Jane—knew what Frances Cable had suffered during the last hour. She accidentally had heard the words which passed between the lovers in the den downstairs. She was prepared when Jane came to her with the news later on, but that preparation had cost her more than any of them ever could know.

Lying back in a chair after she had almost crept to her room, she stared white faced and frightened at the ceiling until it became peopled with her wretched thoughts. All along she had seen what was coming. The end was inevitable. Love as it grew for them had known no regard for her misery. She could not have prevented its growth; she could not now frustrate its culmination, and yet as she sat there and stared into the past and the future she knew that it was left for her to drink of the cup which they were filling—the cup of their joy and of her bitterness.

Fear of exposure at the hand of Graydon Bansemer's father had kept her purposely blind to the inevitable. Her woman's intuition long since had convinced her that Graydon was not like his father. She knew him to be honorable, noble, fair and worthy. Long and often had she wondered at James Bansemer's design in permitting his son to go to the extreme point in relation with Jane. As she sat there and suffered it came to her that the man perhaps had a purpose after all—an unfathomable, selfish design which none could forestall. She knew him for all that he was. In that knowledge she felt a slight, timid sense of power. He stood for honor so far as his son was concerned. In fair play she could expose him if he sought to expose her.

But all conjectures, all fears, paled into insignificance with the one great terror—what would James Bansemer do in the end? What would he do at the last minute to prevent the marriage of his son and this child of unknown parentage? What was to be his tribute to the final scene in the drama?

She knew that he was tightening his obnoxious coils about her all the time. Even now she could feel his hand upon her arm, could hear his sibilant whisper. Now she found herself face to face with the crisis of all these years. Her only hope lay in the thought that neither could afford the scandal of an open declaration. Bansemer was merciless, and he was no fool.

Knowing Graydon to be the son of a scoundrel, she could under ordinary circumstances have forbidden her daughter to marry him. In this instance she could not say him nay. The venom of James Bansemer in that event would have no measure of pity. In her heart she prayed that death might come to her aid in the destruction of James Bansemer.

It was not until she heard Graydon coming up the stairs that the solution flashed into her brain. If Jane became the wife of this cherished son James Bansemer's power was gone! His lips would be sealed forever. She laughed aloud in the frenzy of hope. She laughed to think what a fool she would have been to forbid the marriage. The marriage? Her salvation! Jane found her almost hysterical, trembling like a leaf. She was obliged to confess that she had heard part of their conversation below in order to account for her manner. When Jane confided to her that she had promised to marry Graydon in September—or June—she urged her to avoid a long engagement. She could say no more than that.

Now she sat limp before the two men, a wan smile straying from one to the other, exhausted by her suppressed emotions. Suddenly, without a word, she held out her hand to Graydon. In her deepest soul she loved this manly, strong hearted young fellow. She knew, after all, he was worthy of the best woman in the land.

"You know?" cried Graydon, clasping her hand, his eyes glistening. "Jane has told you? And you—you think me worthy?"

"Yes, Graydon—you are worthy." She looked long into his eyes, searching for a trace of the malevolence that glowed in those of his father. They were fair and honest and sweet, and she smiled to herself. She wondered what his mother had been like.

LUMBER BUSINESS AT COTTAGE GROVE IS PICKING UP

The new 60-horsepower boiler and engine for the McKibben Brothers' sawmill arrived at this place, together with their new cut-off saw, Saturday morning and was sent out to the mill site a few miles east of town over the O & S. E. railroad the same day. It will be remembered that the McKibben mill was destroyed by fire a short time ago, but the boys pluckily went to work at once rebuilding with the result that by the time the new machinery came to hand everything was in readiness for its installation and in a comparatively few days the saws were humming again. This new power equipment will give the mill a capacity of 25,000 per day and the boys expect to experience no difficulty in averaging 20,000 feet per day. Several days will be occupied in sawing lumber with which to replace the 200 feet of flume which was also destroyed at the same time the mill burned, but by the close of another week the mill will be ready to take care of its orders.

A Leader representative visited the site of the new skating rink and swimming pool on Fourth street Tuesday and found that W. B. Cooper had completed the excavation for the swimming pool, 60x80 feet, five feet deep, and had most of the material for the big 80x100 foot two-story building on the ground, including gravel for the concrete foundation and pool. Carpenters will begin the work soon.

The Brown Lumber Co. pumped out their millpond this week in order to enlarge the pond and make improvements on the log dump and chute. Other extensive repairs and improvements are being made preparatory to beginning active operations again.

The Garman-Hemenway Company, of this city, have established a branch store at Yoncalla, and will open for business next Monday, August 31, with a full line of dry goods, clothing, notions, shoes, and everything in ready to wear garments. The Garman-Hemenway Company are among Cottage Grove's foremost business men. They do not wait for business to come to them, but go after it, and their patrons always get full value for their money.—Leader and Western Oregon.

DR. KUYKENDALL FILES ON POWER

Dr. W. Kuykendall, while on his outing at Triangle Lake last week, filed upon a water power site on Lake creek where the creek leaves the lake. He appropriated 100,000 miners' inches of the waters of the creek for electrical power purposes. The point of diversion of the proposed canal is where the creek leaves the lake and the general direction is southwesterly parallel with the creek. The canal will be 15 feet wide at the bottom and six feet deep. Dr. Kuykendall has not announced what he will do with his power site, but it is a valuable one, and it is probable that it will be improved in the near future.

COTTAGE GROVE SCHOOLS OPEN SEPTEMBER 14

The directors of the Cottage Grove schools have decided to have the school term for the forthcoming school year begin Monday, September 14, instead of October 5, as was formerly announced. This means that the schools will open two weeks from next Monday, so the school boys and girls will have to begin to hustle to get ready for another year's hard work. The faculty is: J. V. Baughman, city superintendent; Mary Munday, 11-12 grades; Lulu Currin, 9-10 grades; Harvey Inlow, principal West Side; Lura Mefty, Ella Dickerson, Margaret Riley, Roxy Pringle, Hazel Hazelton, Ethel Moore, Jessie Wilson, Gertrude Palmer, Neva Perkins.—Leader.

H. L. BENSON TIRED OF CIRCUIT JUDGESHIP

Judge Henry L. Benson has resigned the office of circuit judge of the First judicial district, composed of Lake, Klamath, Josephine and Jackson counties. He is a brother of Secretary of State Frank W. Benson, and was speaker of the "Benson House" while Davis, of Eastern Oregon, was speaker of the Anti-Mitchell house in the legislature of 1897 that never organized and failed to make any appropriations or pass any laws. Governor Chamberlain will appoint Judge Benson's successor.

After ten years on the bench Judge Benson has decided that he will return to private practice and make some money.

DONNA ITEMS

(Special Correspondence.)

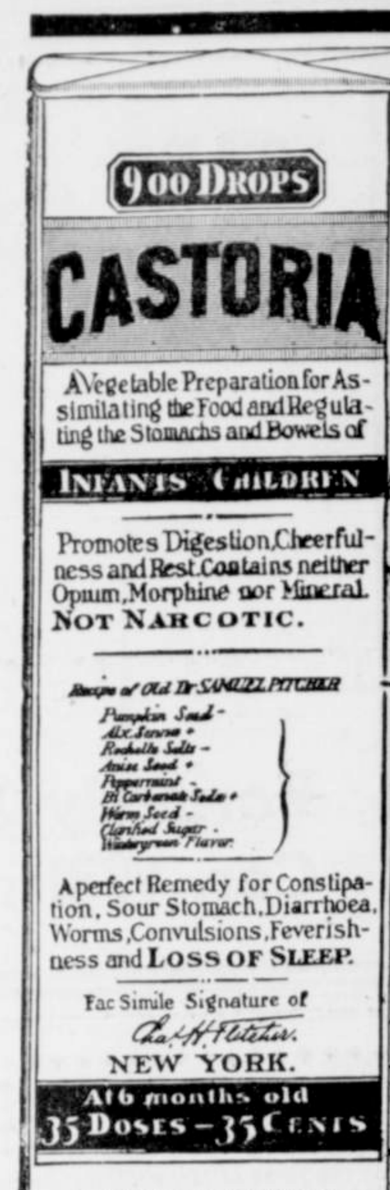
Donna, Aug. 27.—Every one seems to be well, but that is almost always the case with people who reside in "Donnaland."

There has been quite a lot of burning going on, mostly slashings, which were well guarded by those putting the fire out.

Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Anderson went to Eugene Sunday on business.

Hammitt Brothers have finished threshing and returned home Tuesday night. Grain harvest is over for this year and everybody is glad we suppose. The harvest has been very good. Although the yield was not so heavy the quality is of the best. The farmers should feel thankful and we believe they do. Dollar wheat and 50-cent oats ought to put a happy smile on the face of any one who has it to sell. Why not vote for Bryan to remain at Fairview and continue the good thing four years more?

Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Hayden left Monday by wagon for Harney county, to be gone for about a month.



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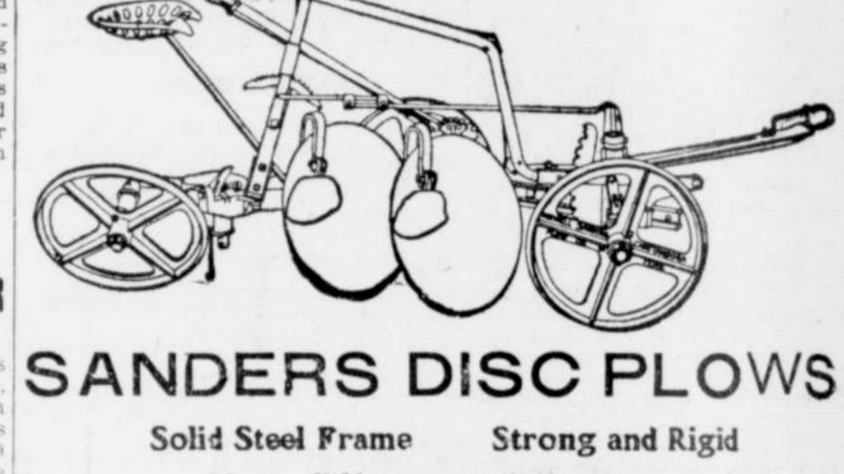

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