

Jane Cable

By GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON, Author of "Beverly of Graustark," Etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN the beautiful and mysterious nurse whose fame had gone up with the soldiers into Tlida's hands arrived with others to take charge of the Red Cross hospital on the day following the battle she found the man she had been longing to see for many weary, heartsick months. She found him dying.

To the surprise of the enthralled command, she fell in a dead swoon when she looked upon the pallid face of Graydon Bansemmer. She had seen her from one pallet to another, coming upon his near the last. One glance was enough. His face had been in her mind for months, just as she was seeing it now. She had lived in horror of finding him cold in death.

It was Teresa Velasquez who first understood. She knew that Bansemmer's own woman had found him at last. Her heart leaped with hatred for one brief instant, then turned soft and contrite. If she had learned to care for the big American herself during the hard days when he had been so tender, she also had learned that her worship was hopeless. She had felt his yearning love for another. Now she was looking upon that other. While the attending nurses were leaning over their unconscious companion the Spanish girl stood guard over the man who had been her guardian, the man whose life was going out before her miserable, exhausted eyes.

Jane Cable stirred with returning life. Teresa was quick to see that words, not medicine, would act as the restorative. She went swiftly to the American girl's side and, clasping her hands, cried sharply into her half-conscious ears:

"He is not dead! He is alive! He needs you!"

The effect was magical. Life leaped into Jane's eyes, vigor into her body. She recovered from the swoon as mysteriously as she had succumbed to it. Her sudden breakdown had puzzled her companions. It is true that she was new in the service; she had seen but little of death and suffering; but, with all that, she was known to possess remarkable strength of purpose and fortitude. That she should collapse almost at the outset of her opportunities was the source of wonder and no little contempt among her fellow workers. The words of the strange girl in men's clothing opened the way to smart surmises. It was not long before every one in the command knew that the "beautiful Red Cross nurse" was not wearing the garb of the vocation for the sake of humanity alone; in fact, it was soon understood that she did not care a straw for the rest of mankind so long as Graydon Bansemmer needed her ministrations.

Ignoring the principles of the cause she served, she implored the doctors to confine their efforts to one man among all of them who suffered; she pleaded and stormed in turn, finally offering fabulous bribes in support of her demands. For the time being she was half crazed with fear and dread, woefully unworthy of her station, partially divorced from reason.

The more desperately wounded were left in the village with an adequate guard, the rest of the command departing with Major March. A temporary hospital was established in the convent. There were two doctors and four or five nurses, with a dozen soldiers under command of Lieutenant Gray. It was while the apparently dead Bansemmer was being moved to the improvised hospital that Jane presented herself, distraught with fear, to the young southerner who had so plainly shown his love for her. She pleaded with him to start at once for Manila with the wounded, supporting her extraordinary request with the opinion that they could not receive proper care from the two young surgeons. Gray was surprised and distressed; he could not misunderstand her motive.

He had gone on caring for her without suspecting that there was or had been another man. She had not confided in him during those weary, pleasant months since they left San Francisco behind them. To learn the true situation so suddenly and unexpectedly stunned his sensibilities. He found difficulty in grasping the importance of the change an hour or two had made. He had fought valiantly, even exultantly, in the past that morning, her face ever before him, her words of praise the best spoils of the victory should they win. He had come down to the village with joy and confidence in his heart, only to find that he was not and could never be anything to her while the life or memory of this fallen comrade stood as a barrier.

Gray's hour following the discovery that she had deliberately sought out and found this stricken private was the most bitter in his life. His pride suffered a shock that appalled him. His unconscious egotism, born of military conquests, revolted against the thought that his progress toward the heart was to be turned aside by the intervention of a common soldier in the ranks. Gentleman though he was, he could not subdue the feeling of indignation that came over him when she approached with her plea, she knew that it was a base sense of power that made him feel that he could punish his private's offender by either denying or granting her appeal. The attitude of self sacrifice appealed to his wounded vanity. He was tempted to profit by an exhibition of his own pain and generosity.

He went with her into the convent and to the pallet on which was stretched the long, still figure of Graydon Bansemmer. A surgeon was standing near by studying the gray face with thoughtful eyes. Gray's first glance at the suffering face sent a thrill of encouragement through his veins. The man was beyond all human help. The grip of death was already upon his heart.

The attention of every one was directed to this tragic struggle. The effects of all were bent to the successful end. Jane Cable, dogged and tireless, came to be his nurse now that the life thread still held together. It is not the purpose of this narrative to dwell upon the wretched, harrowing scenes and incidents of the wilderness hospital—the misery of those who watched and waited for death, the dread and suffering of those who gave this anxiety, the glow of spiritual light which hovered above the forms of men who had forgotten their God until now.

The first night passed. There were sleepless eyes to keep company with the faint moans and the scent of chloroform. Over the figure of Graydon Bansemmer hung the eager, tense face of Jane Cable. Her will and mind were raised against the hand of death. Down in her soul she was crying, "You shall not die!" and he was living, living on in spite of death. The still, white face gave back no sign of life. A faint pulse and an almost imperceptible respiration told of the untrodden thread. Hoping against hope!

Dawn came and night again, and still the almost breathless girl urged her will against the inevitable. She had not slept nor had she eaten of the food they brought to her. Two persons, a soldier and a girl, stood back and marveled at her endurance and devotion. The harassed surgeons, new in experience themselves, found time to minister to the seeming dead man, their interest not only attracted by his remarkable vitality, but by the romance attached to his hope of living.

That night he moved, and a low moan came from his lips. The goddess of good luck had turned her face from the rest of the world for a brief instant to smile upon this isolated supplicant for favor. Jane's eyes and ears had served her well at last. She caught the change in him, and her will grasped the hope with more dogged tenacity than before. The word went out that there was a chance for him. Her vigil ended when Gray came to lead her away—ended because she dropped from exhaustion.

The next morning, after a dead sleep of hours, she returned to his side. The surgeon smiled, and the nurse clasped her hands with tears in her eyes. Bansemmer was breathing thickly and tossing in delirium. It was as if he had been lifted from the grave. Lieutenant Gray was seated in front of the convent late that evening, moodily studying his own emotions. Teresa, still attired as she had been for weeks, hung about the chapel with the persistence of a friendless dog. He watched her and pitied her, even as he pitied himself for the wound he was nursing. What was to become of her? He called her to him.

"Senorita, they say he is better. Tell me, does it mean much to you?"

"Oh, senor, he has been noble and good and honorable. If he lives I shall always hold these weeks with him in absolute reverence."

"Then she does not understand?"

"She? What is there for her to understand? She loves him and he loves her. That is enough."

"She says she will not marry him. There must be a reason."

The girl's face darkened instantly and her breath came quickly.

"You—you think that I am the reason? Is it so? Because I am here in these hateful clothes? You would say that to me? How dare you?"

She burst out with tears of rage and shame and fled from his sight.

Jane came rapidly through the church door, out of the gloom and odor into the warm sunshine and the green glow of the world, her face bright, her eyes gleaming.

"How is he?" she asked. She started, and a warm glow came into her cheek.

"He is doing nicely. If he can bear up until we reach Manila he will surely live. Are we going as rapidly as we should, Lieutenant Gray?"

"Quite, Miss Cable. It isn't an easy march, you must remember." After a long silence he suddenly remarked:

"Miss Cable, I've got a rather shameful confession to make. I've had some very base thoughts to contend with. You may have guessed it or not, but I care a great deal for you, more than for any one else I've ever known. You are to be his to get well. For days I wished that he might die. Don't look like that, please. I couldn't help it. I went so far at one stage as to contemplate a delay in marching that might have proved fatal to him. I thought of that way and others of which I can't tell you. Thank God, I was man enough to put them away from me. Wait, please! Let me finish. You have said you will not marry him. I don't ask why you will not. I love you. Will you be my wife?"

She stared at him with consternation in her eyes. He had gone on so rapidly that she could not check his rapid speech. Her hand went to her brow, and a piteous smile tried to force itself to her lips.

"I am sorry," she said at last. "I am sorry you have spoken to me of it. I have felt for some time that you—of you cared for me. No, Lieutenant Gray, I cannot be your wife," he said.

"I know you love him," he said.

"Yes, it is plain. I have not tried to hide it."

"You must understand why I asked you to be my wife, knowing that you love him. It was to hear it from your own lips, so that I would not go through life with the feeling after all that it might have been. Will you tell me the reason why you cannot marry him? He must love you."

"Lieutenant Gray, he would marry me tomorrow, I think, if I were to consent. It isn't that. It would not be right for me to consent. You profess to love me. I have seen it in your eyes—oh, I have learned much of men in the past few months—and I determined if you ever asked me to marry you to ask a question in return. Do you really know who I am?"

He looked his surprise. "Why, the daughter of David Cable, of course."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."

"No, I am not his daughter."



At that she saw the look of surprise and joy and relief.



CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN Jane brought Bansemmer back to Manila, wounded almost to death, Colonel Harbin had her installed regularly as a nurse for Bansemmer, a concession not willingly granted. Those days were like years to her. She was thin and worn when she came down from the north, but she was haggard with anxiety and despair when the two days of suspense were ended.

Ethel Harbin was her ablest ally. This rather lawless young person laid aside the hearts with which she was toying and bent her every endeavor to the cause of romance. It was not long before every young officer in the city was more or less interested in the welfare of Graydon Bansemmer. She threw a fine cloak of mystery about the "millionaire's son" and the great devotion of her cousin. The youth of the army followed Ethel to and from the hospital for days and days. Without Ethel it is quite doubtful if anybody could have known what a monstrous important personage Private Bansemmer really was.

At the end of a fortnight he was able to sit up and converse with his nurse and the occasional Ethel. Dr. G., chief of the ward, remarked to Colonel Harbin:

"He'll get well, of course. He can't help it. I never knew before what society could do for a fellow. He's got a society nurse, and he is visited by a society despot."

"Do you think he will be able to do any more fighting? Will he be strong enough?"

"I don't see why. The government won't let him do it, that's all. He can claim a pension and get out of service with an honorable discharge—and may be a medal. He'll be strong enough, however. That fellow could go on a hike inside of a month."

"I suppose we'll all be going home before long. This war is about over," growled Harbin.

"No sirree! We'll be fighting these fellows for ten years. Ah, there's your daughter, colonel. Good day!"

With the first returning strength, freed from lassitude and stupor, Graydon began whispering joyous words of love to Jane. His eyes were bright with the gladness that his pain had brought. She checked his weak outbursts at first, but before many days had passed she was obliged to resort to a firmness that shocked him into a resentful silence. She was even harsh in her confidence. It cut her to the quick to hurt him, but she was steeling herself against the future.

When he was able to walk out in the grounds she withdrew further into the background of their daily life. He hungered for her, but she began to avoid him with a strange aloofness that brought starvation to his heart. While she was ever attentive to his wants, her smile lacked the tenderness he had known in the days of danger, and her face was strangely somber and white.

"Jane," he said to her one day as he came in from his walk and laid down his crutches, "this can't go on any longer. What is the matter? Don't you love me—not at all?"

She stood straight and serious before him, white to the lips, her heart as cold as ice.

"I love you, Graydon, with all my soul. I shall always love you. Please, please, don't ask any more of me. You understand, don't you? We cannot be as we once were—never. That is ended. But you—you must know that I love you."

"It is sheer madness, dearest, to take that attitude. What use in the world matters so long as we love one another? I felt at first that I could not ask you to be my wife after what my father did that night. That was as silly of me as this is of you. I did not content long against my mind. You have never been out of my mind night or day. I was tempted more than once to desert, but that was impossible, you know. It was the terrible eagerness to go back to you and compel you to be mine. My father did you a grave wrong. He—"

"But my father did me a graver wrong, Graydon. I have thought it all out."

"Nonsense, dearest. You have saved my life. You must save my love. These last few weeks have knit our lives together so completely that neither of us has the right to change God's evident purpose. I love you for yourself, Jane. That is enough. There has not been an instant in which I have felt that any circumstance could alter my hope to marry you. You say you have no name. You forget that you may have mine, dearest, and it is not much to be proud of. I fear, in the light of certain things. You must be my wife, Jane."

"I cannot, Graydon. That is final. Don't—don't plead, dear. It will not avail. Look into my eyes. Don't you see that I mean it, Graydon?"

"By heaven, Jane, your eyes are lying to me! You can't mean what is back of them. It's cruel; it's wrong."

"Fush! You must not become excited. You are far from strong, and I am still your nurse, Be—"

"You are my life; you are everything. I can't give you up. It's ridiculous to take this stand. Be sensible. Look at it from my point of view."

"There is only one point of view, and love has nothing to do with it. Come, let us talk of something else. Have you heard from your—your father? Does he know you've been injured?"

He looked long into her tense face and then muttered, with the sullen despair of the sick: "I don't know. I've had no word from any one."

"The dispatches have doubtless given your name. One of the Chicago correspondents was talking about you recently. Your father will surely write to you now."

"Are you eager to have him do so? I should think you'd hate his name. I can't help caring for dad, Jane. I tried to curse him, but he really has been good to me. I don't see how he can have done the things they say he's done."

"There may be a mistake."

(Continued next week.)

TAFT OUTLINES HIS POLICY TO CLUB

Cincinnati, Nov. 5.—Speaking to the Cincinnati Commercial Club, of which he has been a member for 15 years, W. H. Taft tonight brought every member of the club to his feet in an address sounding the keynote of prosperity for the country for the next four years.

"Every businessman who is obeying the law may go ahead with all the energy in his possession; every enterprise which is within the statutes may proceed without fear of interference from the administration when acting legally, but all interests within the jurisdiction of the federal government may expect a rigid enforcement of the laws against dishonest methods was the keynote of what Mr. Taft said."

Makes Profound Impression
The speech which Mr. Taft delivered here tonight created a sensation among the substantial business men of the city who are members of the club which gave him the dinner, arranged long before the result of the election could be known, and they arose to a man to the sentiments he expressed.