JANE CABLE

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

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CHAPTER XXXI—(Continued.)

"Of course her family is one of the best. She was a bluestocking. That's where Miss Cable gets most of her good blood."

"Elias, I can't believe it!" cried Graydon.

Jane was staring blankly at the old man's face.

"Your father will tell you the same. For more than twenty years I have known the secret. There is no documentary proof, but this much I do know—James Bansemer received $50,000 for keeping his mouth closed. He found out the truth, and he profited by it, as usual. Oh, he knew that hundred dollar bills are not left with pauper babies. I don't know how he unearthed the truth about Miss"—

"Sh! Don't mention the name aloud!"

"But he did unearth it, beyond all possible chance of mistake. Your father, Miss Cable, is sitting at that table. Don't look up just yet. He is staring at you. He doesn't know you, but he does know you are a pretty woman. The gentleman with the gray hair, Graydon. See? That man is her father."

Graydon half started up in his chair, his lips apart, his eyes riveted on the man designated. Every drop of blood seemed to have frozen in his veins.

"Good God, Elias!" he whispered. "Why, that is"— The name stuck in his throat.

"The son of the man who signed the bank note. He is Jane's father. There's blue blood in him—there has been since King Henry's day—but he is a villain for all that. Now, Miss Cable, I've done my duty. I've told you the absolute truth. You could not have expected more. You could not have asked a greater climax. The name of Vanderbilt or Astor is no better known than that man's name, and no ancestry is better than that of your mother. I will now give to you one of the articles of proof that connects you with their history." He handed to her a small package. "It is the letter written to James Bansemer by your paternal grandfather, agreeing to an appointment to discuss a question of grave moment. I found the letter that same day, and I've kept it all these years. It bears your grandfather's signature. That is all. I heard part of that interview, and I stake my soul that what I've told you is true."

Jane sat looking at him as if paralyzed. Her mind was quite incapable

"Your father, Miss Cable, is sitting at that table."

of grasping the full import of his words—the words she had craved for so many months and yet dreaded.

"I knew he was coming here tonight. He gives a theater party. Tomorrow he goes abroad. That is all."

"He's living in Paris," muttered Graydon mechanically. Jane spoke for the first time, as in a daze.

"I—I have seen him many times in Paris. My father? Oh, oh, it can't be true!"

"Jane, let me take you away from here," began Graydon, observing her pallor.

"No; let me stay. It can't matter, Graydon. I want to look at him again and again," she said shrinking back as if the whole world were staring at her. By the most prodigious effort she regained control of her fleeing composure. It was a trying moment.

"He's worth millions," said Droom. "It will be worth while for you to"—

"No!" she exclaimed passionately. "Do you think I will present myself to him after he has cast me off? No—a thousand times, no!"

At that instant the party of six hurriedly arose to leave the place. The tall man with the gray hair—the handsomest man of all—was staring boldly at Jane's averted face, now red with consciousness. As he passed her in going out of the room his look grew more insistent. She glanced up, and a faint smile crossed his face.

"Handsome girl," he remarked to the man behind him, and then he passed out of her sight, perhaps forever.

"The woman with him," cried Jane, her eyes following the beautiful creature at his side—"is she my mother?"

"No," said Graydon, averting his eyes to avoid her expression; "she is his wife."

Droom waited until the party was out of the restaurant before uttering a word.

"Inside of two years I have pointed out two fathers to their children—yours and his, Jane. Your mothers are dead. There isn't much choice as to fathers. If I were you, I'd say I had the better of the bargain. Take an old man's advice, both of you, and let bygones be bygones. Start life now, just as if nothing had happened before, and get every atom of happiness out of it that you can. Don't you two pay for the sins of your fathers."

"I couldn't live in New York if he were living here," murmured Jane.

"Hey, waiter, your bill," said Droom, with sudden harshness.

It was snowing and the wind was blowing a gale when they emerged from the place. Jane hung heavily upon Graydon's arm. He could feel that she was sobbing. He did not dare to look into her face, but he felt something cruelly triumphant surging in his heart. Elias Droom waited until their cab came up. Then he offered his hand to both hesitatingly, even timidly.

"Good night. Be happy. There is nothing else left for you but that. Graydon, when you write to your father give him my love."

CHAPTER XXXII.

DROOM stood for a few moments in the hurtling snowstorm, abstractedly gazing toward Longacre square. The chill in his marrow was not from the blizzard that swept down upon him. The gaunt gray look in his face was not that of hunger or want. There was fever in his brain and chill in his heart. He had forgotten Jane's trivial tragedy. His one overwhelming thought was of James Bansemer.

The heavy ulster was unbuttoned, and the snowflakes pelted in against his neglected shirt front. A doorman called his attention to the oversight. He came to himself, drew the coat close about his long frame and hurried off down Fifth avenue. The storm was so vicious that he boarded a crosstown car at Forty-second street. A man elbowed him in the narrow vestibule. He looked up and gasped aloud in sudden terror. An instant later he laughed at his fears. The man was not James Bansemer. A cold perspiration started out over his body, however. Through his brain there went racing the ever revolving cry:

"He'll come straight to me—straight to me!"

The hour was not late, but the blizzard had driven the crowds from the streets. Eighth avenue sidewalks were deserted except for the people who were obliged to brave the storm. As Droom hurried south to his lodgings he became possessed of a racking belief that some one was following close upon his heels—some one who was rushing up to deal him a murderous blow in the back. The old man actually broke into a frantic run in covering the last half block.

It was not until he was in his rooms, with the door bolted, that he could rid himself of the dread. The fire had gone out, and the light was low. His teeth chattered and his hand shook as he raised the wick in the lamp. The palsy of inexplicable fear was upon him. Kneeling before the stove, he began to rebuild the fire. His back was toward the door, and he turned an anxious face in that direction from time to time. Footsteps on the stairway sent a chill through his gaunt frame. They passed on up the next flight, but he waited breathlessly until he heard the door of the apartment above slam noisily.

For half an hour he sat huddled in front of the stove without removing his hat and ulster.

"Curse the luck!" he was saying over and over again to himself, sometimes aloud. "Why should he have a pardon? What are the laws for? Curse that meddling old fool Clegg! They'll set him free, and he'll hunt me out; I know he will. He won't forgive me for that day's work. He may be free now. It may have been he who followed me. But, no! That's a silly thing to think. It takes weeks and months to get a pardon. Maybe—maybe they won't get it, after all."

He tried to throw off his desperate feeling of apprehension, chattering all sorts of comforting reasons and excuses to himself as he scurried about the rooms with aimless haste. Try as he would, however, when the time came he could not read—not even of his courage inspiring Napoleon. The howl of the wind annoyed and appalled him. He caught himself listening intently for sounds above and not of the storm. A nervous, intermittent laugh broke from his lips as he went on cursing himself for a fool to be so disturbed by Graydon's report.

"What have I to fear from him? Why should I let that look of his unnerve me so? Why can't I forget it? It—it didn't mean anything. I'm a fool to think of it. Nearly two years ago, that was. Why, he may be"— A new thought chased the old one out before it was formed. His eyes caught sight of one of his completed models standing in the corner. It was the model for the guillotine.

For a long time he sat staring at the thing, a hundred impressions forming and reforming in his brain.

"I wonder if I'll really die before he is liberated," he was saying dumbly to himself. "I wonder if I will. There's no sign of it now. I'm strong and well enough to live for years. Suppose he is freed inside of a month or two. What then? By heaven, I'd be losing the dearest hope of my whole life. My last sight of him—that beautiful vision behind the bars—would be spoiled, undone, wiped out. He'd be as free as I. I won't die inside of a month, I'm sure. He'd come here and laugh at me, and he'd kill me in the end. God! I know he would. He'd have the joy of seeing my pain and terror and defeat—he'd see me last! I'd be bloody and crushed and"—

He checked himself in the midst of these dire forebodings to rise suddenly and cross to the ghastly looking frame with the cords, the hinges and the great broadax that lay harmlessly in the grooves at the top. For many minutes he stood and gazed at the ax, his flesh as cold as ice. Then he tested the cords. The ax dropped heavily to the block below.

The odor of geranium leaves assailed his nostrils. With an ugly impulse he turned and swept the pots from the window box, scattering them over the floor.

He lifted the broadax to its place, tenderly, almost lovingly. "By my soul, it's a beautiful piece of work. It's as sure as the grave itself."

Again he stood off and looked at the infernal bit of his own handiwork, his eyes glistening with dread of the thing. He turned and fled to the opposite side of the room, keeping his back toward the silent guillotine which seemed to be calling to him. He glanced slyly, fearfully, over his shoulder and then faced the thing deliberately, his jaws set, his eyes staring.

"It is a quick way—a sure way," he muttered. "I haven't anything to live for and but a few years at most. Nobody cares whether I live or die—not even I. James Bansemer could not batter me down, as he surely will, if I"—

He crossed to an old chest and unlocked its lid with feverish haste. A bundle of papers came up in the grasp of his tense fingers. Casting dreadful glances at the insistent ax, he seated himself at the table and began looking over the papers.

"He won't take his father's rotten money, but he'll take mine. It's honest. It represents wages honestly, bitterly earned. There's more than $20,000 to give him. He'll be surprised. Twenty thousand!" He laid the first paper, his will drawn in favor of Graydon Bansemer, signed and addressed, upon the table and then carelessly tossed the other documents into the chest. "By the Lord Harry, I'll have the best of James Bansemer yet. His boy will take my money even though he spurns his. God! I wish I could see him when he knows all this. It would be glorious!"

He fingered the document for a tense moment and then arose to remove his coat and vest. These he hung away in his closet with all his customary carefulness. In the middle of the room he stopped, his quivering face turned toward the gaunt thing of execution. His feet seemed nailed to the floor. His brain was urging him to go on with the horrid deed; his body was rebelling.

Suddenly he found his strength of limb. With a guttural howl he clasped his hands to his eyes and fled blindly into his bedroom. Hurling his long, shivering frame upon the bed, he tried to shut out the enticing call of the thing of death. How long he quivered there, shuddering and struggling, he could not have told. In the end—and as suddenly as he had fled—he leaped up and with a shrill laugh dashed back into the other room.

There was no hesitation in his body now. With a maniacal glee he rushed upon the devilish contrivance in the corner, tearing the ax from its place with ruthless hands. Throughout the building rang the sounds of smashing wood, furious blows of steel upon wood, and high above the din arose the laugh of Elias Droom. In two minutes the guillotine lay in chips and splinters about the room.

Dropping back against the wall, wet with perspiration, a triumphant grin upon his face, Elias surveyed the wreckage. His muscles relaxed and his eyes lost the dread that had filled them. The smile actually grew into an expression of sweetness and peace that his face had never known before.

As he staggered to a chair a great sigh of relief broke from his lips.

"There!" he gasped. "It's over; it's over! My head is on my shoulders—it really is after all! It is not rolling into the corner—no, no! By my head—my own head, too—it was a close call for you, Elias Droom. Now I'll take what comes. I'll wait for James Bansemer! I'll stick it out to the end. If he comes, he'll find me here. I've conquered the infernal death that stood waiting so long for me in that corner, and I never suspected it either. How near it was to me! It stood there and waited for me to come. It knew that I would come sooner or later! But I've smashed it. It's gone! It's not there!"

With eager hands he gathered up the pieces of wood and cast them into the stove. As the remains of that frightful minister of death crackled and spit with defeated venom Elias Droom calmly pulled on his worn dressing gown, lighted his pipe and cocked his feet upon the stove rail, a serene look in his eyes, a chuckle in his throat.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

JANE CABLE upon entering the cab offered no resistance when Graydon drew her head over against his shoulder. His strong right hand clasped her listless fingers, and the warmth of his heart came bounding into her veins as if by magic. He did not speak to her, but she knew that he was claiming her then for all time. She knew that nothing could stand in the way of his purpose. The sobs grew less despairing, her understanding of things less vague and uncertain. A few moments before she had felt that she was no kin to the world; now there was a new appreciation of love and its greatness in her soul.

This man had loved her, and he would take her up and shield her against the hate of the world. There had not been a moment when her own love for him wavered. She worshiped him now as she had in the beginning. The revelation of Droom, the theatric scenes in the cafe, the crushing of the small hope she had cherished, all conspired in this secure moment to waken her into a realization of what an overbalancing power love is.

Unconsciously her fingers tightened upon his, and her body drew closer. She was arraying herself against the fear that she might lose this haven of rest and joy, after all—the haven she had been willing to scourge and destroy in the bitterness of her heart. A great wave of pity for herself came sweeping over her. It grew out of the dread that he might, after all, deny her the place that no one else in the world could give.

Graydon's cold face was suddenly illumined. The incomprehensible sweetness of pain rushed through his blood. He had given up his hope as blighted after the harsh hour with Droom. He could not believe his new found success. Doubt, unbelief, enveloped him as he raised her head; a kiss crying for its kind. His arm crept behind her shoulders. She did not offer a repulse. Her wet cheek touched his in submission. It was the first time his hungry arms had held her in centuries, it seemed to him—and to her. It was the first time their lips had met, except in dreams, since that horrid night so long ago.

"Jane, Jane!" he was whispering in her ear. Her plans, her purposes, her sacrifices, were running away from her in riotous disorder. She could not hold them in check. They fled like weaklings before the older and stronger hopes and desires.

They did not know of the blockade of cabs at the corner of Forty-second street nor how long they stood there. Shouting cabmen and police officers tried to rival the white blizzard in profuseness, but they did not hear them.

"Oh, Graydon, I cannot, I must not!" she was crying, holding his hand with almost frenzied disdain for the words so plaintively loyal. "It is out of the question, dearest. You know it is. I love you—oh, how I love you! But I—I must not be your wife. I—I"—

"I've had enough of this, Jane," he said so firmly that she stiffened perceptibly in his arms. "It's all confounded rot. Excuse me, but it is. I know you think you're right, but you're not. Old Elias gave the best advice in the world. You know what it was. We've just got to make our own happiness. Nobody else will do it for us, and it's just as easy to be happy as it is to be the other way. I'm tired of pleading. I've waited as long as I intend to. We're going to be married tomorrow."

"Graydon!"

"Don't refuse! It's no use, dearest. We've lost a year or two. I don't intend to lose another day. What do I care about your father and mother? What did they care about you? You owe all the rest of your life to yourself and to me. Come, will you consent willingly or"— He paused. She was very still in his arms for a long time.

"I do so want to be happy," she said at last, reflectively. "No, no! Don't say anything yet. I am only wondering how it will be after we've been married for a few years. When I'm growing old and plain and you begin to tire of me, as most men grow weary of their wives—what then? Ah, Graydon, I—I have thought about all that too. You'll never reproach me openly—you couldn't do that, I know. But you may secretly nourish the scorn which"—

"Jane," he said, dropping the tone of confident authority and speaking very tenderly, "you forget that my father is a convict. You forget that he has done things which will forever keep me a beggar at your feet. I am asking you to forget and overlook much more than you could ever ask of me. Old Elias, wretch that he is, has pointed out our ways for us. They run together in spite of what may conspire to divide them. Jane, I love my soul, but I love you ten thousand times better than my soul."

"I did not believe I could ever be so happy again," she murmured, putting her hands to his face.

"Tomorrow, dear?"

"Yes."

Graydon, rejoicing in his final victory, hurried to his rooms later in the evening. As he was about to enter the elevator he noticed a gray suited boy in brass buttons, who stood near by, an inquiring look in his face.

"This is Mr. Bansemer," observed the laconic youth who ran the single elevator in the apartment building.

"Something for me?" demanded Graydon, turning to the boy in gray.

"Special delivery letter, sir. Sign here."

Graydon took the thick envelope from the boy's hand. With a start, he recognized his father's handwriting. Curiously he turned the letter over in his fingers as he ascended in the car, wonder growing in his brain. He did not wait to remove his overcoat on entering his rooms, but strode to the light and nervously tore open the envelope. Dread, hope, anxiety, conspired to make his fingers tremble. There were many closely written pages. How well he remembered his father's writing!

As he read his eyes grew wide with wonder and unbelief. They raced through the pages, wonder giving way to joy and exultation as he neared the end of the astounding message from the faraway prisoner.

A shout forged to his lips. He hugged the letter to his heart. Tears came into his eyes, and a sob broke in his throat.

"Thank God!" he cried, throwing himself into a chair to eagerly read and reread the contents of the letter. Suddenly he sprang to his feet and dashed across the room to the telephone.

"She will die of joy!" he half [illegible] in the transports of exhilaration. Five minutes later he was on his way to her hotel, clutching the priceless letter in his bare fingers deep down in his overcoat pocket. He had shouted over the phone that the good news would not keep till morning, and she was waiting up for him with Mr. and Mrs. Cable, consumed by curiosity.

"This letter," he gasped as he entered the room—"from father! He's written, Jane, everything. I knew he would.

"I did not believe I could ever be so happy again," she murmured.

Elias didn't know it all. He knew half of the truth; that's all. Good Lord, I—I can't read it, Mr. Cable! You, please."

David Cable, white faced and trembling, read aloud the letter from James Bansemer. It was to "My beloved son." The first appealing sentences were given to explanation and apology for the determined silence he had maintained for so many months. He spoke casually of his utter indifference to the success of certain friends who were working for his pardon. "If they secure my release," he wrote, "I shall find happiness if you clasp my hand but once before I leave America forever." Farther on he said: "I will not accept parole. It is a poor premium on virtue, and, as you know, my stock of that commodity has been miserably low."

"I may be required to serve my full term," read David Cable. "In that case we should not see one another for years, my son. You have much to forgive, and I have much more to forget. We can best see our ways to the end if we seek them apart. The dark places won't seem so black. * * * My sole purpose in writing this letter to you, my son, is to give back to you as much happiness as I can possibly extract from this pile of misery. I am not pleading for anything; I am simply surrendering to the good impulses that are once more coming into their own after all these years of subjection. * * * I am not apologizing to the Cables. I am doing this for your sake and for the girl who has wronged no one and to whom I have acted with a baseness which amazes me as I reflect upon it inside these narrow walls.

"You will recall that I would have permitted you to marry her—I mean, in the beginning. Perhaps it was spite which interposed later on. At least be charitable enough to call it that. Clegg has been here to see me. He says you are bound to make Jane Cable your wife. I knew you would. For a long time I have held out, unreasonably, I admit, against having her as my daughter. I could not endure the thought of giving you up altogether. Don't you comprehend my thought? I cannot bring myself to look again into her eyes after what she saw in this accursed prison. * * * She was born in wedlock. * * * The story is not a long one. Elias Droom knows the names of her father and mother, but I am confident that he does not know all of the circumstances. For once I was too shrewd for him. The story of my dealings in connection with Jane Cable is a shameful one, and I cannot hope for pardon either from you or from her."

Here he related as concisely as possible the incidents attending Mrs. Cable's first visit to his office and the subsequent adoption of the babe.

"I knew that there were wealth and power behind the mystery. There was a profitable scandal in the background. Unknown to Mrs. Cable, I began investigations of my own. She had made little or no effort to discover the parents of the child. She could have had no purpose in doing so, I'll admit. * * * [Here he gave in detail the progress of his investigations at the Foundlings' home, at the health office, at certain unsavory hospitals and in other channels of possibility.] * * * At last I found the doctor and then the nurse. After that it was easy to unearth the records of a child's birth and of a mother's death, all in New York city. * * * Droom can tell you the names of Jane's parents, substantiating the names I have just given to you. He did not know that they had been married nearly two years prior to the birth of the child. It was a clandestine marriage. * * * I went straight to the father of the foundling. He was then but little more than twenty-one years of age, a wild, ruthless, overbearing, heartless scoundrel, who had more money but a much smaller conscience than I. * * * Today he is a great and, I believe, respected gentleman, for he comes of good stock. * * * I had him trembling on his knees before me. He told me the truth.

Egad, my son, I am rather proud of that hour with him.

"It seems that this young scion of a wealthy house had lost his insecure heart to the daughter of a real aristocrat. I say real because her father was a pure Knickerbocker of the old school. He was naturally as poor as poverty itself. With his beautiful daughter he was living in lower New York, barely subsisting, I may say, on the meager income that found its way to him through the upstairs lodgers in the old home. Here lived Jane's mother, cherishing the traditions of her blood, while her father, sick and feeble, brooded over the days when he was a king in Babylon. The handsome, wayward lover came into her life when she was nineteen. They were married secretly in the city of Boston.

"The young husband imposed silence until after he had atttained his majority. There was a vast fortune at stake. In plain words, his father had forbidden the marriage. He had selected another one to be the wife of his son. * * * Jane was born in the second year of their wedded life. It was of course important that the fact should be kept secret. I am inclosing a slip of paper containing the names of the minister, the doctor and the nurse who afterward attended her, together with the record of death. It is more convenient to handle than this bulky letter, which I trust you will destroy. You will also find the name of the hospital in which Jane was born and where her mother died ten days later. I may say in this connection that not one of the persons mentioned knew the true name of the young mother, nor were they sure of the fact that she was a wife. Her gravestone in the old cemetery bears the name of the maiden, not the wife. Her father never knew the truth. * * *

"What I did in the premises need not be told. That is a part of my past. I learned how the cowardly young father, glad to be out of the affair so easily, hired the nurse to leave the baby on the doorstep. Then I went to the banker whose son he was. I had absolute proof of the marriage. He paid me well to keep the true story from reaching the public. The son was whisked abroad, and he afterward married the girl of his father's choice. I do not believe that he has ever given a thought to the whereabouts or welfare of his child. It was her heritage of caste!

"If Jane cares to claim her rights as this man's lawful daughter, proof is ample and undeniable. I fancy, however, she will find greater joy as the daughter of David Cable. Her own father has less of a heart than yours, for, after all, my son, I love you because you are mine. Love me if you can. I have nothing else left that I care for. Remember that I am always your loving father,

"JAMES BANSEMER."

The End

OREGON ELECTRIC WILL BE EXTENDED TOWARD EUGENE

"There is a strong possibility that the extension from Salem to Albany will be constructed during the coming year," stated General Agent G. W. Talbot, of the Oregon Electric, who was here yesterday with Traffic Manager G. F. Nevins and General Agent C. S. Walters. The latter took position yesterday as general agent of the Salem district to have charge of all the territory south of Wilsonville.

"It is merely a question of constructing an extension to Albany or completing a line to McMinnville. We would have put in the Albany extension this year had we not received such genuine disapprobation from the city council there, but conditions seem better now.

"We had fully made up our minds to build to McMinnville, after we had been turned down by the Salem people, but the outlook for the Albany extension and small difficulties along the right of way are so much smaller no doubt we may find opportunity to construct the Albany extension during 1909, and possibly both of the roads."—Salem Statesman.

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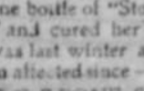

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