

Jane Cable

By George Barr McCutcheon
Author of "Beverly of Graustark," Etc.

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seiner lounged there in blissful contemplation of a rosy 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—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 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.

"That's 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 so."

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

"Wasn't that the way men do toward—?" 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—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 120. 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!"

ed. 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 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!"

Bansemmer 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 his 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. Wine-mann is the logical man for president. But where is Jane?"

"She's—ab—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 Bansemmer felt that the man aged a year to 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've—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 can assure you—"

"I know. It's all right, my boy. 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 Bansemmer. 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 Bansemmer 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 Bansemmer'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 Bansemmer'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 Bansemmer 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. Bansemmer 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 Bansemmer 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 Bansemmer.

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 Bansemmer'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.

(Continued Next Friday.)

BEGINNING

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Notice to Contractors and Property Owners.

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the terms of Ordinance No. 780, passed by the Common Council of the City of Eugene, August 13, 1908, bids will be received by the street committee of the Council in the office of the City Recorder of the City of Eugene until 7:30 o'clock p. m., Monday August 31st, 1908, for the improvement of Sixth Street from Olive street to the West side of the alley between Willamette and Oak streets in the City of Eugene, by the construction of cement curbing along both sides of said street and by paving the same between said points with bitulithic, asphalt, or other hard surface pavement in accordance with the plans and specifications therefore, now on file in the office of the City Recorder.

Bidders are required to state the price in detail in accordance with the specifications, and on the form prepared by the City Engineer. Separate contracts will be awarded to the lowest bidder for the construction of said curbing; for the paving and for the drainage. The said improvements shall be completed within ninety days from the date of letting the contract therefor.

The work to be done under the supervision of the Street Committee and to be approved by them. An approved bond will be required of each contractor for the faithful performance of the contract. A certified check in a sum equal to five per cent of the amount bid, payable to J. D. Madsen, Mayor, is required to accompany each bid. The Street Committee reserves the right to reject any or all bids. By order of the Common Council.

R. S. BRYSON,
Assessing Recorder.

Dated at Eugene, Oregon, this 18th day of August, 1908.

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