

JANE JENNINGS
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Monroe

Jane Jennings was the daughter of John and Ann MacIntyre Jennings, and the third child of a family of twelve children. They lived on a farm about two miles from the village of Monroe, Wisconsin.

Jane's mother often said "Jane was once a little girl but never a child". She never romped and played as the other children did.

At the age of five Jane assumed responsibilities and duties in caring for the children younger than herself, she was her mother's constant helper. She was the leader of the family.

At the age of sixteen she taught in country schools, she was a great reader and constantly improving herself; she never read cheap literature, the best to be had was her choice and in this way perfected her own English which was faultless.

Courage, charity and self-sacrifice were her greatest characteristics with innate refinement that gave her retiring nature a manner which appeared unresponsive and cold. It was difficult to understand why her thoughts were always for others and never for herself.

In 1864 there were thousands of wounded and sick soldiers lying in Armory Square hospital, Washington, D. C., one of these soldiers was her brother, Dudley. Jane made up her mind that her brother and other wounded soldiers needed her help in nursing them, she had had experience in nursing members of her family.

Her preparations were few, she put her wearing apparel in an old valise and started for Washington. It meant something in those days to take such a trip and especially by one who had not been a hundred miles from home.

She took sufficient lunch to last her to Washington,

her trip was in a day coach and she was two days and two nights on the train. She landed safely (she always did) and after finding a room to deposit her valise, she started for the hospital, she found it, presented herself to Miss Dorothy Dix, who was head nurse. Miss Dix heard her story, then asked her how old she was, Jane told her. Miss Dix shook her head and said "We do not take any one under thirty years of age." Jane was disappointed but not discouraged. Miss Dix asked her if her mother approved of her coming. Jane told her she did, her mother prepared her lunch.

Jane's splendid courage never deserted her, she sought her brother and talked it over. He told her Dr. Bliss was in charge of all the army hospitals in Washington.

Jane found Dr. Bliss, she told him her story. He was greatly impressed with this serious and determined young woman, who was tall and so slender she almost looked frail. Dr. Bliss told her he would give her a chance to nurse the soldiers in tents; there were many of them from the over-crowded hospitals. She began as an assistant nurse; in two weeks she was placed in charge of a number of tents directing others. For over a year she gave her entire time to the soldiers (without compensation) until all tents were vacated by soldiers going home and being removed to main building. Dr. and Mrs. Bliss became her life-long friends.

She was given a position in the United States Treasury; she did not remain here long on account of her health, which had been over-taxed by her constant nursing. She took up journalism; her first letters were published in the Janesville (Wis.) Gazette, then the Milwaukee Sentinel, Chicago Tribune, Inter-Ocean, Springfield, (Mass.) Republican, Boston Transcript, New York Times, New York Tribune and New York Independent. The latter two papers she wrote for for many years, the Independent until a few weeks before her last illness.

In 1872 she bought a home in the town of Monroe and moved the family into it. This was a very comfort-

able home and beautifully located. She retained this home for any of the family as long as she lived.

She made several trips abroad, traveled in Austria, Belgium, France, England, Scotland and Ireland. She spent a winter in Italy, the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Harris, our American Consul at that time. During all her travels she wrote for New York papers; her graphic descriptions of scenery, folk-lore, environments, etc. were exceedingly interesting. She also visited Alaska, and much interested in the development there.

Later she went to Hawaii, where she was much disappointed in being unable to visit Father Damien, who was in charge of the leper colony on the Island of Molokai. The conditions for landing on the Island at that time were uncertain and dangerous; women were not permitted to take the risk.

In 1898 she joined Clara Barton in Cuba, and again devoted her time to nursing soldiers lying in hospitals at Sandiago. She remained here until a ship load of convalescent soldiers were sent to New York; the boat was over crowded. Miss Jennings was the only woman nurse on the vessel. When they were well out at sea an operation was performed on one of the soldiers. She was present and assisted at the operation; she insisted upon this soldier being given her state room, saying "A cot will do for me; put it anywhere, this man must be made comfortable." She gave him constant care; she saw him placed in an ambulance in New York to be taken to a hospital. Again she declined compensation for her services as a nurse to soldiers.

About four years later, she was passing the Ebbit Hotel one day when a big bronzed and healthy fellow came dashing after her and called her by name. She turned and looked at him. He said, "Miss Jennings don't you remember me, you saved my life." She could not recall ever having seen him before. He laughed and said, "Do you remember the man on the Seneca, the one that was operated on and you gave him your state-room—They took about a gallon of pus out of my lungs at that time—I'm the man."

She never lost interest in her state or her home town. She was interested in every project that had an uplift to it. She was interested in the schools, and served on the school board, she was called to Madison a number of times when the legislature was in session for consultation on educational matters. She believed in the practical education that would lead to useful development and not the theoretical kind; she believed in community interest for all the children and their education. Her great sympathy was always with the poor and down-trodden and believed 99 per cent of unfortunates were victims of circumstances.

She believed the Red Cross was one of the greatest blessings given to humanity; she also believed that Clara Barton was the founder of the Red Cross in America. She and Miss Barton were devoted friends for many years. She taught and demonstrated First Aid to all ages from ten years to thirty years.

In 1910 she published two books, one the "Blue and the Gray," the other "Abraham Lincoln, the Greatest American." The latter named book was from the depths of her heart, she cherished the memory of Lincoln with great devotion; she thought him one destined by God to do a great mission, he was her ideal of an American.

Jane Jennings was always a busy woman. She looked upon idleness as a sin, industry a virtue, work a blessing that all might share. Reading was recreation for her, and especially newspapers. She believed a good newspaper was a great educator, and every home should have one for the family to read, it kept them in touch with the topics of the day. She never lost interest in government affairs, she was 100 per cent pure American.

The beginning of her last illness was in Monroe, July 7, 1915. One of her sisters came from Washington and remained with her until October, when she had sufficiently recovered to make the trip to Washington, here she was given every attention and comfort to be had. She died December 30, 1917. She is buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Monroe, Wisconsin.