

The Chronicles of Addington Peace

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THE TRAGEDY OF THOMAS HEARNE

(Continued.)

"I saw you by the cairn and circle above the Black brook this afternoon," he went on. "Is that to be the scene of your present investigations?" "I have no definite plan at present," I said with a snap.

He took a long look at me and stopped his questions. I left the table as soon as I could do so decently, routed out the landlord and engaged a private room. I had had enough of taking meals with a neolithic expert.

It was blowing hard next day, a fierce northwester that cleaned the clouds out of the sky like a sponge washes a slate.

Just after eleven I started out to make a further examination of the position. I wasn't such a fool as to march up to the cairn with old Hearne and a warden or two, as it might be, spying on me from another hillock, so I went down the high road that lay as white and clear across the gray moor as a streak of paint, until I had left the place some distance behind me. No one, so far as I could see, was in sight, and presently I turned off the road along a disused cart track that seemed to lead in the direction I wanted. Its ancient ruts were filled with sprouting heather, and the short moor turf had covered up the hoof-marks with a velvet surface.

I had walked a good quarter of a mile, when, rounding a curve of the hill, I found the old road explained in the ruins of a small farm, one of those melancholy memorials of a time when frozen meat was unknown, and it paid a man to breed cattle and sheep and cultivate a wheat field or two, even on Dartmoor. The roof had fallen in, and the woodwork had been carried away, but the stone walls of the house and outbuildings still remained undefeated by a hundred years of storm. A weather-beaten cherry tree was pushing out its spring leafage before the door.

Leaving the farm, I began to climb the cairn hill, as I must call it for want of a better name, which sheltered the farm from the north and west.

It was rough walking, for the heather was set thick with granite boulders. At last I reached the top, skirted the mound set about with stones where the prehistoric chief lay sleeping—and very nearly stepped upon the body of that old fellow, Thomas Hearne.

Luckily for me he never turned his head. The wind on the face of the hill was blowing in great gusts like the firing of a cannon, and my footsteps had been drowned in its thunder. I crept back behind a heap of tumbled rocks and dropped on my hands and knees, watching him through a convenient crevice. He lay flat on his chest, while he covered the gang at work in the new ground below with a small telescope.

It might be curiosity, of course, for many men regard a convict as something abnormal, something that is as pleasant to stare at as if he were the cannibal king at a fair. And yet that seemed a weak explanation. Was he in with the police? Had they got news that an attempt at rescue was to be made? If so, I stood the best chance in the world of finding myself in the county jail within the week.

There was nothing to be gained by imagining bad luck. I walked back to the inn, and sat down to a study of the district with maps I had brought with me. There was only one railroad within many miles, and that was the single track that ran up from Plymouth to Princetown village. At the first signal that a convict had escaped the station would be full of warders; so that outlet was barred. South of the moor, fifteen miles away, ran another branch line ending at Ashburton. But I was determined to leave the railroad alone. The stations would be the first places to be watched by the police. Torquay, some thirty miles away, might easily be reached by a good horse and trap within the day. I could hire one for a month through the landlord, with the excuse that I wanted it for my exploring expeditions amongst the stone remains. It would surprise no one if it were seen off the roads with a luncheon-basket prominently displayed. So I decided.

I questioned the girl who brought the meal to my sitting-room as to old Hearne, but she could give me little

information. He had arrived at the inn a couple of days before I appeared, and had spent most of his time in long walks on the moors. She thought he had a friend amongst the prison officials, for she had twice seen him coming out of the great gates down the street. That was all—and it left me more anxious about him than before. It was becoming very plain that before I took any decided step towards the escape, I must make sure of this man's business on the moors.

After dinner I walked into the inn bar to buy a smoke, and found Hearne with his back to the fire, talking to the landlord. As I entered, they both dropped into an uneasy silence. I was certain they had been discussing me, but I didn't want to let them know it, and so began to talk big about the scenery. I stayed down for about half an hour, and then allowed that I would get back to some writing I had to do.

"I'm glad you admire the moor, Mr. Kingsley," said the landlord, holding back the door for me. "Nothing quite like it in the states, I should think." Upon my soul, I was as near as may be to owing him had never been there. But I remembered that I was Abel Kingsley, of Memphis, just in time.

"No," I said, "it's something quite unique."

"It's a wild place, sir," he went on. "Very wild and desolate. You should take a walk one night when the moon is full, as it is now. Then you would understand how the stories of ghost hounds and headless riders and devils in the mires first started. Mr. Hearne here is going to take my advice."

"Tonight?" I asked, turning to the old fellow.

"No, Mr. Kingsley, I am too tired to think of it tonight," he said. "Tomorrow or the next day, perhaps."

I wished them a good evening and tramped up the stairs to my sitting-room, which looked over the moors at the back of the inn. It was certainly a splendid night, with a great searchlight of a moon drawing the strange tors—as they call the granite caps of the hills—in black silhouette upon the luminous skyline. I lit a pipe and sat there in the shadows, thinking, thinking. It was pleasant to be a decent man again, to wear clean linen and boots with real soles; to wash and shave and brush myself daily. I was back in my Eden days before the fall, when six hunters were in my stable, and men and women were glad to know Jack Henderson of Lowood Hall in the best of counties; yes, I was away from Princetown village in the midst of happy memories when I came to my senses with the sound of a soft tap-tapping under the window. There were tip-toe skulking footsteps on the gravel of the yard; Heaven knows but my ear had been well trained to such steps as those.

I crept softly to my window and peered out. The man was almost across the yard, moving in the shadow of the pig-sties. As he stopped at the wicket-gate that opened on to the moor, he turned his head to the moon. It was Hearne again.

I decided on that instant. I slipped on my boots and ran down the stairs. The landlord was locking up for the night as I came to the front door.

"I'm going to take your advice," I said with a laugh.

"Very good, sir; I will sit up for you."

"No, no, give me the key. Has Mr. Hearne gone to bed?"

"Yes, sir, about ten minutes ago."

"His room is on the first floor, isn't it?"

"No, sir; he chose one on the ground floor. He preferred it."

The wiser man, thought I. He needed no door when he had but to open his window and step out.

When I got to the back of the inn Hearne was a good four hundred yards away, climbing a low ridge. As he disappeared over its edge I set off running at top speed, for I saw that in so broken and rugged a place I should have to keep close to his heels or I should lose him altogether. It was well I did so, for when I reached the crest of the rise he had vanished.

Presently, however, I caught sight of him again, walking very fast down a hollow at right angles to the line he first took. It led in the direction of the cairn hill.

It was hard work, that two miles' stalk across the moor. Sometimes I ran, sometimes crawled, sometimes lay flat on my chest with my head buried in the heather like an ostrich. Once I tried to cut a corner across what seemed a plot of level turf and struggled back, panting, from the

grasp of the bog with the black slime almost to my waist. But I took great credit for my performance since the old man tramped steadily forward, showing no sign of having seen me.

He did not climb the cairn hill as I had half expected, but skirted along the base until he came to the track which led to the ruined farm. Down this he walked quickly and passed through the doorway of the main building. I remained upon the slope of the hill, waiting for him to reappear. Five, ten minutes went by, and then my curiosity got the better of my prudence. I determined to go down and see what he was about.

The place was sheltered from the gale, but I could hear it yelping and humming in the rocks above, now and again a gust came curling up the valley, setting the heather whispering around me. I crept forward over the soft turf of the cart track, reached the gap where the door had been, hesitated, listened, and then stuck in my head.

I had been a boxer in my time, or that would have been the end of me. As I ducked, the heavy stick flicked off my cap and crashed into the wall with a nasty thud. I jumped back, and he came storming out through the doorway like a madman. I never saw more beastly fury in a man's eyes. I side-stepped, and he missed me again—it was a knife this time. Then I woke up and let him have it with my right under the ear. He staggered, dropping the knife. As he stooped to pick it up, I jumped for him and in ten seconds more was sitting on his chest, pegging out his arms on the turf. He tried a struggle or two; but he soon saw that I was far the stronger man, and so lay panting, with a hopeless despair in his face, that in a man of his age was shocking to witness. He had tried to kill me, but, on my honor, I felt sorry for him.

"Well, Mr. Hearne," I said, "and what does this mean?"

"Too old," he gasped. "Twenty years ago—different. How did you suspect? It was justice—nothing but bare justice, by Heaven!"

"Now, what in the world do you think I am?" I asked him, in great surprise.

"A detective. You couldn't deceive me."

I got to my feet with a curse at the muddle I had made of it, and he sat up staring at me as if he thought I had gone clean crazy of a sudden.

"I'm no detective," I said angrily, "though I was fool enough to believe you were one."

"Then why did you follow me tonight?" he asked, with a quick suspicion.

"Why did you try to kill me?" I said. "The truth is, Mr. Hearne, you and I are playing a risky game. Is it to be cards on the table, or are we to separate and say no more about it?"

He sat watching me for a time with a puzzled look. Plainly he was in great uncertainty of mind.

"Perhaps I have nothing to tell," he said at last.

"A man does not attempt to murder detectives unless he has a crime to conceal."

"That is true," he said, nodding his head; "very just and true."

There was nothing to be gained by

a long bargaining of secrets with him. Whatever his business, he could speedily discover mine if he chose. If I were honest with him he might return the confidence.

"I am arranging for the escape of Julius Craig, now doing his time in the prison yonder," I told him.

"Julius Craig!" he echoed, with wild eyes. "The escape of Julius Craig?"

"Yes. Do you know him?" He burst into a scream of hysterical laughter, swaying his body to and fro, and pressing his hands to his sides as if trying to crush the uncanny merriment out of him; and then, before I guessed what he was about, the old fellow was upon me, with his arms about my neck in mad embrace.

"Welcome, comrade," he cried. "I, too, have come to find a way out of Princetown jail for Julius Craig."

It took a good five minutes and a pull out of a flask to get him back to hard sense. Then he told me his story sitting on a fallen stone under the old cherry tree.

Craig was dearer to him than any brother, he said, with a burst of open sincerity. There was that between them that he could never forget while life remained to him. He had heard how the man had come under prison discipline, and had come to help him escape if that were humanly possible. Of me or my London employers he knew nothing whatever.

He had been shown over the prison, having obtained a pass from an influential friend, and while there had learned the place where Craig was daily employed. Yesterday from the cairn hill he had satisfied himself that the convict was working in the gang.

He had crept out this evening to examine the stream and hedge which divided the new enclosure from the moor. When he saw me on his track, his suspicions as to my business were confirmed. Either he must give up his project or my mouth must be stopped. So he tempted me into the ruined farm. The rest I knew.

He spoke in an easy, pleasant voice, with a perfect frankness and good humor. It never seemed to occur to him that he had done anything unreasonable, anything to which a level-headed man could object. I stared at him in growing amazement.

There seemed, indeed, only one solution before me—that he had become partially insane.

"You must understand my position, Mr. Kingsley," he concluded. "I am not a lunatic, but I have made up my mind in this matter of Julius Craig. Any one who is foolish enough to come between us must stand aside or take the consequences. Towards yourself, for example, I had no ill will. In fact, I rather liked you. But you must admit that, as a detective, your presence was excessively inconvenient. Now that I know the truth, I welcome you as a most valuable ally. I am prepared to trust you absolutely. Come, what are your plans?"

I told him as we walked back to the inn. He expressed himself an admirer of their simplicity as we parted for the night. Mad or not, I had found an assistant who would be of great help to me. So I let it stay at that and slept like a rock till nine next morning.

(CHRONICLES TO BE CONTINUED.)

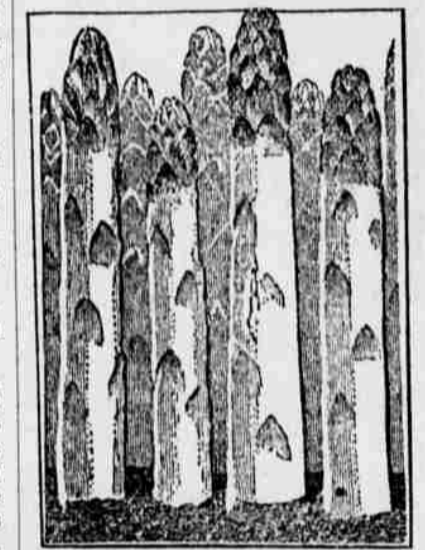
ASPARAGUS IS HARDY

Select Spot Where Plant Can Remain Permanently.

Land Should Be Deep, Rich, Fertile, Moist and Cool, With Warm Exposure—Plant in Rows the Same as Corn, Etc.

One of the best and easiest grown of our garden perennials is the asparagus plant, says Green's Fruit Grower. It can be started either from seed or from plants. If one wishes to raise plants to sell, plant the seed, but if asparagus is wanted for home or market use it is better to set out yearling seedlings.

It is important in laying out the asparagus plantation to select a place where it can remain permanently for if taken proper care of the plantation will last for twenty years. The old idea was the asparagus "bed." The new is to plant in rows the same as corn, etc., so that for the market garden the cultivation can be done by horse. The land selected should be a deep, rich, fertile, moist and cool soil, having a warm exposure, a gradual southern slope being preferred. If the land is originally hard and coarse, it should be worked a year or two in advance by the raising of some thoroughly tilled crop, using as much manure as possible in the process. Late, deep, fall plowing is preferable, turning under a thick covering of well-rotted manure. In the spring, when the frost is out of the ground, plow furrows from six to ten inches deep and four feet apart. If the soil is not of the best quality two or three inches of well-rotted manure should be placed in the bottom of each trench



One of the Best Bunches.

and on this add a couple of inches of loose soil. Then place the plants in the trench three or four feet apart. Cover with three inches of earth, it not being well to cover deeper, as it takes too long for the young shoots to push their way through. As the shoots grow the rest of the earth can be filled in around them by after cultivation. When filled in, the crowns of the plants should be about six inches below the surface of the ground, for if planted much less the roots will push up to the surface and interfere with the cultivation.

Wheat, Rye and Barley.

Wheat and rye have about the same composition, although wheat is somewhat richer in protein. Rye is in general tougher and harder to grind. Both are quite digestible, but less so than corn, on account of the larger percentage of hull. When they can be had at about the price of corn they may profitably form a part of some rations. They are fed more satisfactorily when ground than when whole. Barley seems to rank between wheat and oats. It is not used very extensively as a stock food in the east, except when the quality is too poor to permit its use for malting purposes.

Grass Demonstration.

A new line of work of the department of agriculture and one that is very promising was begun last year in conducting demonstration experiments in grass. One hundred demonstration farms of one acre each were established in 20 counties in South Carolina. An average yield of 3,146 pounds of cured hay at an average cost of \$23.66 per acre was produced, and in some instances as much as 5,000 or 6,000 pounds of cured hay an acre was harvested. These highly satisfactory results have stimulated great interest in grass growing, especially in South Carolina. A vigorous grass campaign has been started in North Carolina, Virginia and other states. It is expected that 5,000 or more alfalfa demonstrations will be conducted this year in Virginia alone.

Let us not wait until too late to make up our minds about what we are going to do in the way of poultry raising. Let us plan ahead and then just work it out when the season comes. But in our planning, let us not neglect the present work in the poultry yard.



SHOWING VAGARIES OF FAME

How Rubinstein, at the Height of Eminence, Refused Offer That Meant Great Distinction.

Teresa Carreno, the eminent woman pianist, indulging in reminiscences of her career of fifty years before the public, tells a story of Tschalkowski and Rubinstein, which, in one respect, is illuminating.

Rubinstein, the great Russian master, composer and performer of his time, is seated in his study when Tschalkowski arrives and humbly asks permission to dedicate to the great man a concerto for piano and orchestra. Rubinstein examines the composition hastily; flies into a terrible rage; shakes his lionine head and asks the affrighted Tschalkowski how he dares to offer to dedicate this "trash" to a man of such eminence.

Thereupon, Tschalkowski leaves the house, and by chance, meeting the conductor Von Bulow, offers him the dedication, which is accepted.

Observe the mutations of time! Rubinstein was a great musician, a remarkable performer, but not a composer of the first rank by any means. Tschalkowski has sprung into the first rank of composers and is generally regarded by musicians as one of the greatest musical geniuses Russia has produced.

A dedication by him of one of his works is in itself title to unusual distinction, and will make for the perpetuation of any one's fame, while, as

the years bring a lessening of memory of Rubinstein's wonderful playing, his reputation is bound to diminish.

Thus, even the pet of fortune and circumstances can afford to be courteous, for posterity often rewards courtesy and properly punishes overweening self-esteem.

Where the Weight Fell.

Among the ancestors of Wendell Phillips were several Puritan clergymen. Perhaps it was a push of heredity which made him, at five years of age, a preacher. His congregation was composed of circles of chairs, arranged in his father's parlor, while a taller chair, with a bible on it, served him for a pulpit. He would harangue these wooden auditors by the hour. "Wendell," said his father to him one day, "don't you get tired of this?" "No, papa," wittily replied the boy-preacher; "I don't get tired, but it is rather hard on the chairs."

For Reference.

"See that man over there. He is a bombastic mutt, a windjammer nonentity, a false alarm, and an encumberer of the earth!" "Would your mind writing all that down for me?" "Why in the world—?" "He's my husband, and I should like to use it on him some time."—Houston Post.

Unable to Appreciate It.

To some men popularity is always suspicious. Enjoying none themselves, they are prone to suspect the validity of those attainments which command it.—George Henry Lewes