

AN EPIC SUMMARY OF THE HARGIS FEUD

Stirring Tale of Treachery and Crime From Facts Collected for the New York Times--Characters in This Sensational Drama--Record of the "Judge"--A Political and Judicial Boss of the Mountainous Counties of the Blue Grass State

From the New York Times.
CROSS the river from, and indeed almost within sight and sound of the new made grave among the pertulivke and rhododendron of the Hargis burying ground, the brass band at the Jackson skating rink was crashing out "Waiting at the Church," while hand crossed and clasped over hand, Jackson youth and Jackson beauty, the one puffing a cigarette, the other chewing a wad of gum, rolled round and round together over the glaringly new pine floor to the rhythm of the gay, mock mournful music hall melody.

Though the rink was now running full blast it had been less than an hour since the morning sun, breaking through a mist of rain, had melted the melting close about, first began to shed, not to say waste, its flood of glory upon the sordid ugliness of the new little Kentucky.

But then the newly incorporated, like the newly rich, must needs take its pleasures vicariously and in imitation, and the city of Jackson is very newly incorporated.

Where Hargis Ruled.

Looking up the steep incline leading from the rink, by courtesy Main street, unpaved, like every other, and hock deep in the mud now steaming in the warm sunshine, one could see pipe rooting in front of Hargis Brothers' basement. Presently a store, while directly opposite several cows, lean and big eyed, gazed placidly across the threshold of the little building, the house of Hargis and its feudal enemies alike are only too familiar, and where that glided youth, young Beech Hargis, was this morning laughing for the murder, in a drunken rage, of his father.

Three days had passed since the long funeral procession had moved slowly down the mountain side to lay the body of James Hargis in the grave.

"Buryin'" of Dead Feudist.

Even Sam Cockerill, the sworn enemy of the Hargis clan, had the grace to close his poolroom.

The American flag, hung at half mast on the balcony over the court-house door, had been indeed a flag of truce for the Hargises, the Cockerills and the Cardwells, and consequently a flag of truce for all their several retainers and vassals; and with such excellent results that notwithstanding the fact that more than 8,000 persons from the feudal mountain counties had turned out to the "buryin'," not a shot was fired in Jackson that day.

And now, the prescribed period of civic mourning having elapsed for him who had been alike his chief judiciary, his political foe, his feudal enemy, and most public spirited citizen--now, on this the morning of the fourth day after that great pageant, the greatest that bloody Breathitt county has ever seen, Jackson had awakened bright and early to resume the even tenor of its way.

Political Boss of Region.

You will look for a particular spot in Breathitt county where this month fork turns out itself sharply, making almost a loop, and there you will find the town of Jackson, whence James Hargis ruled as absolutely over the 17 big counties composing the congressional district as ever did any feudal lord of the middle ages over a much less extensive territory.

Just across the river from the little old, that stands for more than a century, a tiny peninsula, which in this case almost an island, formed by the detour of the river already described, this tiny peninsula, the town of Jackson, known as the Pan Bowl, and has been since time immemorial the birthplace and breeding place of the house of Hargis. It is likewise their family burial ground.

Less than 60 feet wide at its neck, which, continuing for more than a half a mile, suddenly broadens like the bowl of a long handled dipper, its seven and a half miles of circumference, which is bounded by steep precipices, Pan Bowl farm, so called, constitutes an all but impregnable natural fortress, with its rushing waters of the Kennebec as a sort of stupendous moat.

No highland chieftain ever ensconced himself in a more formidable position, and here in this homestead of the Hargis family in the fastness of the widest region in the Appalachian mountains.

And hither, to Pan Bowl farm and the burying ground of the house of Hargis, I went on this clear mild February morning.

Across the river, as I stopped to pay my penny at the toll bridge connecting the Pan Bowl with the main road, I flashed a blinding glitter from the icicle bearded cliffs, which at the water's edge and half way up the mountain side were clothed with the dark green of rhododendron and of fir.

A Typical Mountaineer.

"How much of a walk is it to Mrs. Hargis' house?" I innocently asked the gate keeper, a blue-eyed, gentle faced young mountaineer of the rare type which John Fox Jr., has so beautifully and so persistently drawn from what I had discovered about rural southern locations, as meaning anything from a half mile to a day's ride.

He bit my penny, dropped it in the fire and looked at me out of his guileless eyes with a look that was half scorn and half contempt.



Reason for Fighting Spirit.

Two words will suffice to explain the initial motive for this feud spirit, and those words, the open sesame to practically every social phenomenon and monstrosity on earth, are heredity and environment.

Jackson, that ugly little semi-barbaric settlement across the river from the Pan Bowl, represents a most interesting and concrete example of atavism in a region where the civilization of the world has been out of which the rest of the world had emerged ten generations ago.

In other words the blood of the Scottish Highlanders from whom the Kentucky mountaineer derives his pedigree, fierce, clanlike, feudal blood, the elements of which have been peculiarly conserved by reason of the inaccessibility of the mountain fastnesses in which their lives are spent--is asserting itself now precisely as it asserted itself in the Scottish highlands in the days of Bonnie Prince Charlie and the border wars.

Judge Smoking in Court.

Naturally, then, one did not look to find any ordinary hall of justice; and so when, climbing to the court chamber on the second floor, I passed little groups of men talking politics and feud gossip in the corridor, the while whittling away with their jackknives at door knobs, window sills, paincoating, anything in the form of an available piece of wood, I was not so very much surprised.

Country Almost Inaccessible.

The nearest hearse is 93 miles away. Coffins are bought and sold in the general store where a man buys his sugar and chewing tobacco and the calico for his wife's dresses. There are no houses in Breathitt county, and there are no hearses in any of the surrounding counties. And why? Because there are no roads in any of these counties on which a horse or any other wheeled vehicle could be hauled.

If any one doubts this statement let him try to hire a horse and buggy in Jackson, as I foolishly tried to do, and he will discover that even a buckboard is as impossible of materialization in Jackson as is a hearse.

There are absolutely no wheeled vehicles save ox carts in this unique town, and people who would travel about the country must do so either on foot or muleback.

Like Fierce Scottish Clans.

So to this day the Kentucky mountains and their people convey the indelible impression of a bit of Scotland transported.

The psychology of the average Breathitt county mountaineer and citizen of the highlands of Scotland, Scotch-Irish, fiercely clanlike, ready to shoot at the drop of the hat, capable of the blackest treachery in the wearing of his kilt, and ready to die for his clan, still a more weird paradox he has a respect for the letter of the law and order such as few other American citizens ever entertained or dream of entertaining.

am traveling over this distance between the toll bridge and "Grannie log residence," that rude, four-roomed log house where the old clan mother sits lamenting the last terrible tragedy fallen upon her family--now, let the reader go with me in imagination back to the town of Jackson, where I had spent the two previous days studying the people there and the psychology of the feud which for years has made a vast section of the state notorious and the influence of which has been felt, politically and socially, in every county and every township of Kentucky.

The courthouse, as already stated, is historic in the Hargis-Cockerill-Cardwell feud. Feudists have been killed time and time again in the courthouse and in front of the courthouse, and feudists have been killed across the street with bullets fired from the courthouse windows.

It is said that the Hargis concern alone does a wholesale trade amounting to \$100,000 a year. If Jackson were not a "dry" town, and if this section of Kentucky were not vehemently prejudiced against saloons in any form, Judge Taubee have for years carried on an immense trade, both wholesale and retail, not only in Breathitt county, but in all the surrounding counties.

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Murder the Chief Topic.

"But you don't think they'll hang him, do you?" asked a lugubrious-looking elderly woman. "Just so they don't hang him! That would be terrible, for he'd have no chance, or mighty little, to have God pardon his sins in such a short time betwixt his trial and the day of the hangin', while if they'd only 'pin' him he'd have a chance to get his sins washed away while he was in the 'pin'."

Test of Social Standing.

But back to the judge and my errand to the courthouse. The man I recognized as the jester whom I had called upon previously tiptoed forward and, learning my errand, suggested that I call upon Judge Taubee at his "eto," at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Court would adjourn at that hour, and after that the judge would be found waiting on his customers.

Consequently a few minutes before that hour I walked into the judge's "eto," which is an emporium for everything from a garden rake to a paper of pins, and from a cuspidor to a dinner set.

While in no wise comparing in extent or magnificence with the "Hargisbrothers' mammoth department store," which in addition to general commodities also enjoys a monopoly of the coffin, furniture and sewing machine trade for all Breathitt county, still the judge's "eto" represents a flourishing business, with his half dozen clerks busily engaged in measuring of calico, weighing butter and sugar and counting eggs.

Anticipating the query as to why the big judges and political bosses of this part of the state should be engaged in the mercantile business, the answer is because it is the surest way to wealth and that the social station of the great merchant is here an unassailable one.

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Exactly as the Tammany politician is interested in the saloon business the mountain politician is interested in the buying and selling of dry goods and groceries. The Hargis brothers and Judge Taubee have for years carried on an immense trade, both wholesale and retail, not only in Breathitt county, but in all the surrounding counties.

Many of them were mountaineers, the mules and the ox teams on which they had lumbered in from the hills were hired to the row of posts behind the courthouse, flanking the jail. They husbands had in all probability come in to "vote."

The mountaineer who lives within walking or riding distance of a courthouse is always in "vote." Not always as a litigant, to be sure, but because it is one of the few diversions of his narrow, colorless life, precisely as the weekly visit of his wife to the "sto" is.

"Lordy, Lordy! w'at it terrible!" one thin gaunt creature was lamenting to the clerk as she chewed judiciously at a scrap of dress goods to see if it was all wool.

And his poor mother, it's her that's surely 'twixt the fires now, for haven't I often heard Mis' Hargis say that if anybody killed her 'Jim' she'd spend the last penny he left her and the children to hunt his murderer down and hang him. And now that murderer turns out to be her own Beech!"

So I was quite unprepared, when I asked to see Mrs. Hargis, to have her answer quietly and very simply that she was the widow of the murdered feud leader.

Bidding me come in and "visit" a while, I followed her "woeful figure into what I later discovered to be the drawing-room from the mother, and sitting upon the hearth, beside which was a crock of cream that had been carried in from the kitchen to heat preparatory to churning.

The walls, hung with dark, ugly paper, religious ardor, while in their husbands and brothers it manifests itself in pugnacity and irritability.

Shows Southern Hospitality.

Mrs. Hargis dropped her spare frame into a little low rocking-chair, and, folding her thin hands across her black apron, looked at me inquiringly. In her manner, even in the midst of all the horrible tragedy she has faced and in now facing, there was all of the

traditional hospitality of the southerner, whether of the mountains or the lowlands.

In all rural simplicity she asked me first thing if I wouldn't "lay off my things." They say when Judge Hargis was brought some dead she carried on like a madwoman, but now she spoke of the tragedy with the resignation of which she seems the very personification of what she would do it.

A body sort of gets used to things, and I've been through so much. And it wasn't as sudden as it might have been, and she made no more of it than any other woman would make of it. It was the daughter, the only daughter of the house of Hargis, and her mother introduced her as Mrs. Hogg, the bride of a month.

There could be no more curious antithesis than that between the mother and her daughter, the one rural and unsophisticated in her apron and sunbonnet, and the other cruder in her fashionable Louisville mourning, her fair hair curled and arranged in a fearful tangle on the floor, proceeded to cut another from the great plug on the counter.

His glance was friendly and generous as in the glance of any Kentucky gentleman and Judge when a woman comes to ask a favor of him, and I knew before he spoke what his answer would be. I little dreamed, however, of the diction in which that answer would be expressed.

"I done told that jaller to let you in to see young Hargis, 's far as I be concerned," he drawled out. "I done told him I hadn't got no objections to lettin' a lady into the jail. Now, if it was man, it might be different, but being your a lady, and from the press, it's all right."

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were still further disfigured with ghastly crayon portraits of the Hargises and the same cheap chromos I had found in the hotel parlor down the street.

The windows, guileless of curtains, boasted the extraordinary elegance of inside shutters, the upper sections of which, thrown open, allowed the sickly and now fast fading winter sunlight to fall in and display as the most conspicuous piece of furniture in the big room, that modern carved bedsteads elaborately dressed in a lace counterpane, with lace pillow-shams to match.

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sat behind Redwine and dictated his every move. One day, incited by Hargis, Redwine made an adverse ruling which so incensed the majority of the delegates that, drawing revolvers and making a great tumult, they started to stampede the platform. Redwine started to run, but Hargis caught him and knocked him into his seat.

"But they'll kill me, Jim, if I stay," he is quoted as saying.

"Yes, and I'll kill you if you don't stay," the boss of bloody Breathitt is quoted as replying. Redwine stayed, and needless to say, Hargis had his way and the objectionable ruling stood, willy-nilly. Goebel was nominated and Hargis became more powerful than ever.

He had himself chosen a member of the Democratic state central committee and his influence now stretched throughout the state, an influence which on various occasions was wielded vigorously through the same man Redwine, who now leaned upon his

gate as any ordinary villager might at the end of the day's work.

Attorney for the Family.

As I approached he leveled a pair of steely, coldly suspicious gray eyes upon me, his jaws shut with a click, and when he saw that I was about to stop and speak he laid his hand ostentatiously upon the gate latch and held it fast.

In response to the introduction of myself Judge Redwine lost no time in expressing his unqualified opinion of newspaper reporters generally, and of newspaper reporters particularly, without regard to either age or sex.

"Curiously enough," though a mountaineer born and bred, there seemed to course through his veins another strain of blood from that of the typical Kentuckian of these regions. Here was no soft drawing speech, but words bitten off like pieces of steel, in sharp, clear enunciation. Here was no hint of gentleness or dalliance with and deference to weaker women such as Judge Taubee had shown and such as James Hargis was famous for.

Judge Hargis might, and indeed did, kill and cause to be killed many a man, but his manners to the women folk, even of his hereditary enemies were those of a cavalier.

wine up here in these fastnesses, who seemed to have learned all the up-to-date philosophy of George Bernard Shaw, and to have learned it so consummately that I went awed without so much as asking the question.

Rugged Ancestral Home.

And now my long walk to visit Granville Hargis at Pan Bowl farm, with a description of which I began this story, is almost completed. Following the line of the little narrow gauge railroad which the Hargises several years ago built through their land to carry the timber from their logging camp down to the valley, I have come at last within sight of the old homestead where for generations the Hargises have been born.

It is a homely, sweet looking old place, built upon a little knoll in a great cornfield. Out of the big stone chimneys at either end the blue smoke is rising, and as I walk up the rise of ground leading to the gate I notice the glint of the marble headstones in the burial lot at the side of the house and behind the old garden.

Inside the gate lilac bushes grow in clumps on either side, and skirting the flagstone walk leading to the door are the withered stalks of last summer's blinding meads and hollyhocks. At the door a soot-gingered woman, puffing away at a clay pipe, answers my knock, and when I inquire for Mrs. Hargis she too looks incredulous.

"No, Mrs. Hargis, she don't live here, but Granville Hargis does, if it be your affair, and he's a good deal of a hospitable in her tone, and then made me enter.

The room we stepped into was kitchen, parlor, dining-room in one. A great fire burned in the wide chimney, a bright rag carpet covered the floor, equally bright chromos hung on the wall between somber family portraits in cheap crayon, and the furniture was all that could be desired in the way of bright varnish and much gingerbread work.

Come of Spartan Stock. The woman, an ancient servitor of the family, led me through this room and into another, the bed chamber of the clan mother, who sat with folded hands looking meekly into the fire. A faded, but still beautiful, young woman in a blue dress, she had substituted for a

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JUDGE HARGIS