

A Political Vendetta

By
WELDON J. COBB

CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

Hope sprang to the gap, hands outstretched, to stay his speeding foe, but Kane had vanished. Peering past the edge of the broken balcony floor, he saw Kane go feet foremost down past the sidewalk and through a window area, arched with a stone coping.

The fall was a full twenty feet. "Has he escaped me—killed?" cried Hope. The thought aroused him to quickened action. He swung back to the window, upsetting an obtruding politician, whose attention had been attracted by the noise of the scuffle—in the precipitancy of his rush.

Through the room, down a staircase and out to the street Hope hurried. He reached the spot where he had seen Kane disappear. He stared down the dark aperture, then called:

"You—Kane!"

No response. He knelt and flared a lucifer. Its rays showed a shallow dip, faced only by the barred cellar window.

"Gone?"

Electrified, baffled, Hope sprang to his feet and glared around the spot, piercing the distance with much the furious glance of a tiger thrown from the trail.

It was presumable—it was certain—Kane had sustained a light fall, had instantly recovered his wits and had climbed out of the window area and escaped.

Whither?

Hope ran twenty feet in one direction, then in another, paused—growled, enraged. His fingers tore the air—he was on fire with chagrin and fury. Abruptly he focussed the contending emotions that distracted his usually keen wits to a reasonable but rapid estimate of the situation.

He had alarmed—had warned—his enemy. Kane's one thought now would be of flight, of hiding. He was beggared, discredited; the friends he had dragged down to ruin would be friends no longer.

Hope could think out his probable course. First, money—then, distance. Would he baffle vengeance? Oh, never, never!

Kane parted the crowd in the street without ceremony. He reached a more quiet side thoroughfare. An empty cab came dashing around the corner, its driver fresh for his night's work, the steed attached mettled and ready for speed.

In a minute Hope was inside, brief, exact orders given to the cab driver. The vehicle became a thing of flight.

CHAPTER XII.

Inside of the hour Hope made three calls—all disappointing ones. To the elegant apartments occupied in the past by the arch-swindler, to the home of his chief and confidant, to a club where both sometimes spent their evenings.

He got trace of the company president. He was with some choice friends, drowning fear and dejection in strong drink. With him Hope had nothing to do, so he continued his search, but he gained no conclusive trace of the man he sought.

He knew the machinery of the law well, from past critical experience, and besides had a hundred—aye, a thousand—ready aides whom he could rely on—recent assistants in the political battle he had fought so hard to win, but which now seemed as a bubble, a mere bubble to him.

The first reckless fever of triumph and hate had changed, however; he no longer thought of immediate public denouncement of his enemy. A slow, refined method of meeting out his vengeance appealed to him, and he considered only personally securing the fugitive again, secretly arraigning him, probing deeper for detailed confession and positive, conclusively damning facts.

"I must find him—I alone—before the night is through," decided Hope. "Where is he hidden? What will his course be? Free—the fight is lost! I acted with rash precipitancy, but the temptation was strong. Patience, Everett—my murdered brother! Ten years, and so many days in all those years! Yet all sworn to this climax! Patience, the hour has surely come!"

But precious time had already gone by and Kane had not been found. Every minute at leisure thus meant golden time to perfect his plans for security for the fugitive. Finally an inspiration seized Hope.

"The mills!" he said, swiftly, and the driver, appraised, started his horse's head in a new direction.

The works were not in operation. Here and there presented evidences of light and action, but only to a degree evidencing the necessary means of keeping important steam and blast essentials in shape for the morrow. The election had caused a general stoppage of labor, and as Hope neared the mills at a furious rate of speed, the grim, black outlines of stacks and bunkers were ghoulishly suggestive of the ruin brooding over the doomed enterprise.

His body thrilled in the swaying vehicle and his eyes lit up, as, sharply scanning every part of the structure where the general offices were located, he made out a certain speck of light.

It was in the single room bulb illuminant in the entire building, and it marked that section of the same given over to the private headquarters of the executive.

A quick theory, a keen hope, inspired the trailer. It was quite natural that Kane should come hither. Some spoils there were yet on hand to seize, some incriminating documents, doubtless, to destroy before he abandoned the sinking craft, and signaling a stop in an avenue formed by towering heaps of pig iron, Hope leaped to the ground.

"Wait for me here," he ordered the cab driver.

"All right, sir."

Hope sped forward. He was yet a little ways from the mills proper, but he adjudged it best to approach with caution. There was a labyrinth of criss-cross lanes and roads to pursue, and suddenly, as he emerged into the main cindered path, that out the factory expanse due south and north, he very nearly ran under the feet

of two prancing steeds drawing a closed carriage.

He darted back in time to save himself, though the vehicle guards quite grazed his body. Inside he made out a single occupant of the carriage—a man.

"Not Kane?" he reflected rapidly, "but someone on a mission of urgency. Sent for?"

Strong in this conviction, Hope hastened forward. He was soon lining the side of the building he had in view. The carriage was no longer in sight. It had probably cut around to the main front entrance. His steps bent also thither. Hope paused abruptly.

A watchman might challenge him, the doors might be unlocked to admit the visitor, relocked to exclude others—hence, no thoroughfare. Again, it was an interminable, and in the dark an unfamiliar distance from the portal to the secluded and exclusive corner range of private offices on the third floor, where Hope had observed the guiding light. It shone there yet; he could note its rays piercing a prism frame, and immediately he resolved to gain its vicinity by especial and original means.

For too many long, watchful weeks had that nest of luxury and scheming known the untiring cynosure of Gideon Hope, that he should not now know its environment and every available outside approach.

His motive to present, clear and simple, was to speedily reach the vicinity of the room beyond the lighted window. With feverish activity he sealed a fire-escape, gained a roof, espied the situation in closer touch and found how he could get within direct sight and sound range of the occupants of the room that was his present objective point of interest.

The apartment fronted the mills. It led out at the rear to a light shaft. Here there was a single small window. Its base was broad and extending, sufficiently so to admit of a person finding safe and comfortable foothold there, and thither, without much difficulty, by clinging to some wires looping from the roof, Hope lowered himself eight feet.

Now he could see into the room, and also hear what might be spoken within its confines, for the upper sash was tilted outward for ventilation.

He saw Percy Kane at a first quick scan of the office interior; he heard his voice also.

All the hot, surging passion of his nature once more set brain and heart on fire. Swung perilously pendant above far nothingness, at midnight, here and now Gideon Hope watched a new chapter open in the tragedy under play—the final one he grimly considered, for the white face, the haunted eyes, the trembling, twitching frame of the man upon whom his glance rested, told him surely that Percy V. Kane, wrecker, assassin, fugitive, was at the last ditch!

CHAPTER XIII.

Kane bore the appearance of a man in a frightful state of mental incertitude and excitement. The high strain of tremendous thoughts obliterated all his customary steadiness of glance and bearing, and every action was spasmodic.

He had just welcomed to the room the occupant of the carriage. Hope had noted this person centered the watcher's immediate attention. Hope recognized him as the cashier of the principal local bank, guessed his mission, grimly decided he had come upon the scene fortuitously.

"I called you up," he distinctly heard Kane say.

"You roused me out of bed," answered the other. His glance took in Kane gravely and anxiously. "What's up, now?" he continued.

"I sent for you as a friend," said Kane, in a pitiful, faltering tone.

"Very well—I come as a friend," reported the other.

"But I intimated business, further—vital, speedy."

"I am prepared for that also," observed the bank cashier.

He placed a hand-beyond the buttoned lapels of his coat, half withdrew, wholly replaced again, a bulky, oblong package.

Kane's eyes lit up electrically, and immense aspiration of relief, of joy, escaped his lips.

"Friend, indeed!" he cried, effusively grasping and wringing the hand of the other. "Wortie, it's life or death for the Trust! It was a queer message to send to a man—in the dead of night, but there was no other way. See here—we are in deep waters!"

"I know that, of course," observed the cashier. "But I estimated you knew your business. You telephoned me to get two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in cash, bills of large denomination, and bring them here at once."

"And you have them?"

"Two hundred and fifty-one thousand dollars bills—yes."

The schemer's face flamed with gladness—and sinister triumph.

"Now, what is your proposition?" resumed the cashier.

"Simply this:

"As I say, we are at the limit with that money, I can hurry to Pittsburg, may be able to make a turn that saves us. You have pretty nearly everything tangible we've got in the way of securities. I propose to turn over to you, in addition—wait, I'll show you I esteem this friendly act of yours."

He turned to the vault. Click—click! His nimble fingers sent the disc spinning, came for me, and blindly I obey you, though—oh! the woe of it!—I have gone to become Percy Kane's wife!"

"The bonds and stocks of the executive," he explained—"the last dollar we hold. I turn them in as collateral, trusting you absolutely."

The man of money was fairly amazed. He stood staring down at the securities in the tin box.

"Kane," he said, a flush of genuine pleasure and emotion on his face, "this is generous! Of course, only considered as giving us absolute control of everything,

is the security valid, but it shows you don't intend to leave a friend like myself in the lurch if anything happens, eh?"

"Never!" spontaneously asserted the other, never flinching as he realized the vast treachery this transaction meditated towards his confidant in the trust.

Nearer to the ventilating slit in the window frame Gideon Hope pressed his face. With burning glance he viewed the contents of the tin box gone over. The cashier examined the bonds and stock it contained. The flush on his face showed that he was satisfied with the security offered, but he was slow and methodical, and the impatient Kane, watching him covertly, frequently wetted his dry, parched lips with his tongue, and panted quite, and often started at the slightest strange outside noise.

Hope read him through and through—at cowardly sacrifice he had secured the ready means to carry him to the ends of the world, if he choose—and he was anxious to start upon the journey.

"All right," sonorously stated the bank cashier at last, replacing the securities in the box, and setting that receptacle near his hat and came on a stand, as if taking possession. Then his hand again sought his breast pocket. Kane's eager, brilliant eyes rustled like a ferret. He stole out a hand trembling from excitement, to seize the coveted money.

At that moment Gideon Hope restrained himself no longer.

"Hold!" he cried. Both men started—the cashier in clear amazement profound. Kane as though a voice from the grave—or the rostrum of justice—had challenged him.

Hope pressed on one window frame, but could not move it from the outside. This commotion at once centered the attention of the two occupants of the room.

"What's that?" sharply demanded the cashier.

"Give me the money!" breathed Kane. "The wind, some drunken workman. Hurry up, Wortie! I'm due to make quick train connections."

He would have snatched the cashier's hand and the precious package it held unceremoniously from his breast, but the latter forcibly pressed him back.

"Hold on—let us investigate this queer occurrence," Wortie insisted—"heavens!"

Crash! clatter—Hope had precipitated a fearful climax. He could not move the sash. Tearing the soft flexible cap he wore from his head, he twisted one hand inside of it, and his fingers thus guarded, dealt a smashing blow at upper light of glass.

It shattered to brittle nothingness. It rained inside the room in noisy, scintillating fragments. Framed in this prismatic shower, he stood revealed—a dreadful presentation to Kane, a source of vivid stupefaction for the bewildered bank cashier.

"Don't give that man the money!" mandatorily shouted Hope.

Now, he himself was baffled. Steel bars, light but strong, covered the inside window frame. He had known of their existence previously, but in the excitement of the past few moments had scarcely been consciously aware of the formidable barrier they presented.

"Who is this?" stared the astounded cashier.

"The money!" pleaded Kane, white and fear-filled.

"No!" cried Hope. "Hold him off till I—seized the bars, shook them vainly, and gritted his teeth in futile desperation.

"The money!" persisted Kane, now pressing upon the cashier in a certain menacing way.

"Listen!" spoke Hope hotly, calling through the bars: "this man has deceived you. He has no thought of redeeming the trust—he is seeking only to fly, leaving ruin behind him, and you will be involved if you perfect this transaction. Be warned! He is a criminal, a fugitive, a murderer!"

Blankly the cashier stared at this weirdly appearing, impressive accuser.

"The money, I tell you—I will have it!" snarled Kane.

Frenzy, murder, was in his reckless eyes. He fairly leaped upon the cashier.

"What this man says"—debated the cashier, sternly disputing forcible dispossession of the money package.

"The truth!" thundered Hope. "You, six—strike him back! your money is lost, if he secures it."

"Give it up!" howled Kane repulsed, and seizing from a table a heavy ornamental ruler.

It was a sample of the metal product of the mills, and deadly as the bludgeon of a highwayman.

He lifted it. The bar whistled through the air, descended. There was a sickly thud, a crash, as, spurring blood from a frightful gash in the forehead, the unfortunate bank cashier toppled backward over a chair, carrying it to ruins, and sinking with a groan senseless to the floor.

Kane stopped over him, tore the package of money from his still spasmodically clenched hand, cast a last startled glance at the face and form at the window, and dashed from the room.

(To be continued.)

His Wife.

The agent stepped briskly up to Mr. Meekly's desk and laid a small article close to his right hand.

"I have here a new letter opener," he said, "a handsome article to be kept on the table in your library, say, and—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Mr. Meekly, without turning his head, "but I have already the best letter opener, and the quickest."

"How long have you had it?" persisted the agent. "You know there are constant improvements always being introduced."

"Mine couldn't be improved," responded the gentleman. "I've had her for about two years now—anniversary of the wedding next month"—Stray Stories.

Have You Seen Her?

"What kind of a woman is she?"

"One without diplomacy."

"Without diplomacy?"

"Yes, she will argue with an iceman about the size of the lump until it all melts away and there is only a wet spot on the sunny sidewalk."

Different Viewpoints.

Said She—I always enjoy meeting a man with a history.

Said He—I don't. My office boy has strict orders not to admit book agents

MENELIK II AND HIS PEOPLE.

Mighty Monarch of Abyssinia Who Welcomes Civilization.

Few mightier monarchs than Menelik II of Abyssinia ever swayed the destinies of a people. Throughout the vast territory of the Abyssinian highlands his individual will is law to some millions of subjects, laws also to borders of savage Mohammedan and pagan tribesmen without the confines of his kingdom. His court includes no councillors. Alone throughout the long years of his reign Menelik has dealt with all domestic and foreign affairs of state.

But now this last splendid survival of the feudal absolutism exercised and enjoyed by medieval rulers is about to



KING MENELIK II.

disappear beneath encroaching waves of civilization, which long spare nothing picturesque. Cables from far off Addis Ababa, Menelik's capital, bring news that he has formed a cabinet and published the appointment of ministers of war, finance, justice, foreign affairs, and commerce.

And this change has come not from the pressure of any party or faction within his kingdom, for such do not exist; but out of the fount of his own wisdom—a wisdom so sound as to prove him a most worthy descendant of the sage Hebrew King Menelik claims as ancestor,—if indeed more proofs were necessary than the statesmanlike way in which he has dealt with jealous diplomats, and the martial skill with which, at Adua in '96, he defeated the flower of the Italian army and won from Italy an honorable truce.

Whether or not the claim of Menelik that he is lineally descended from a son supposed to have been born to the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon of old is true, and there is no real reason to doubt it, it is certain that in race type Abyssinians plainly resemble the sons of Israel, crossed and modified with Coptic, Hamite and Ethiopian blood, and to this day cling closely as the most orthodox Hebrew to some of the dearest Israelitish tenets, notably in their antipathy to pork and to other meat not bled before dead, to observance of the Sabbath and the rite of circumcision. And this notwithstanding that the Abyssinians have been Christians since the fourth century of this era, when, only eight years after the great Constantine decreed the recognition of Christianity by the state, a proselyting monk came among them with faith so strong, heart so pure, and eloquence so irresistible, that single handed he accomplished the conversion of the Abyssinian race.

"CHIC'S" STEPMOTHER.

He Liked Her Even After He Thought He Wouldn't.

"Chic" had never been a bad boy, and there was no reason outside of the story books why he should begin now, just because a sweet-natured woman had come to mother him and his two little sisters; but Chic could not see it in that way. He knew about stepmothers, how they told tales in whispers, and poisoned the hearts of kind fathers against their own children, so he decided to have his fling.

The first thing he did was to go down to Jim Harding's one evening after dinner and stay until 11 o'clock. That was as far as he really planned. It was no fault of his that the cable broke, and that he finally reached home at 1 o'clock of a cold winter morning, to discover that the latch key with which his father had entrusted him a few days before had disappeared from his pocket.

Here was trouble. The house was dark and silent, and Chic knew that his father, called from his slumbers at that hour to admit a 12-year-old son, would need no stepmother's prompting, but would be quite capable of acting for himself. With this in mind, instead of ringing, he discreetly propped round the house in search of a basement window that he could force. He found one at last, opening over the coal bin; but the door leading up-stairs was securely barred, and at 2 o'clock in the morning a dejected boy lay down on the cement floor, with feet propped against the furnace, and fell sadly asleep, to dream of the things an irate father, egged on by a stepmother, would do to him in the morning.

The next minute it was daylight, and a pleasant voice close to him was saying, "O James, look! On that cold floor all night! He must have forgotten his key. I saw it on his dressing table when I went in this morning. And we closed the house so early! He did it for me, James, I know he did. You spoke at dinner about my headache, and he wouldn't disturb me by ringing; but I couldn't have slept a wink if I had dreamed he was down here. He's waking up, James."

"There, son, there!" said Chic's father, with unheeded gentleness, as he helped the astonished boy to his feet.

"Pretty hard bed, wasn't it? You might have rung, my boy, but I'm proud of

you for being so thoughtful. Wash up now and come to breakfast."

With that he started up-stairs, but Chic, still blinking, stood and stared at his stepmother. Could it be—was she really so innocent, or—

"To think Chic," she was saying, softly—and there was a look on her face that made him remember his own mother—"I was afraid you didn't like me!"

"Pooh!" he answered, with a sudden big lump in his throat. "I guess I do!"—Youth's Companion.

Old Fashioned Breakfast.

How dear to my heart is that scene of my childhood

Which fond recollection recalleth to view;

The damask-clad board with its lavishly piled food,

Delectable fare my young appetite knew.

The thick, juicy beefsteak, the omelette by it,

The crisp, fried potatoes, seductively brown,

The rumpart of toast with the marmalade nigh it—

Ambrosial breakfast, where now thy renown?

The old-fashioned breakfast, our forefathers' breakfast,

The long-ago breakfast of vanished renown.

Those rich-tinted waffles, how toothsome and tender,

Their dimpled delights on those mornings of yore;

How oft to their delicate charms I'd surrender,

How sweet the libation I'd over them pour.

How calm the content that would softly unfold me,

As each melting mouthful slipped lusciously down.

And how I'd have sorrowed had any one told me

That opulent breakfast would lose its renown.

The old-fashioned breakfast, our forefathers' breakfast,

The long-ago breakfast of vanished renown.

How bleak is this modern repast of the morning,

It differeth far from the feast of my dream.

That succulent fern the bare table adorning,

I yearn to devour with sugar and cream.

I'm weary of hay, predigested and shredded,

On health-giving sawdust I look with a frown,

The pangs of dyspepsia are less to be dreaded—

Oh, bring back the breakfast of ancient renown;

The old-fashioned breakfast, the dear, deadly breakfast,

The long-ago breakfast of vanished renown.

—Richmond News-Leader.

Carried Out Instructions.

Every sailor has his story of the mistakes which landlubbers make over the names of things at sea, which always seem to be exactly the opposite of what they are on land.

A new boy had gone on board a West India ship, upon which a painter had also been employed to paint the ship's side. The painter was at work upon a staging suspended under the ship's stern.

The captain, who had just got into a boat alongside, called out to the new boy, who stood leaning over the rail, "Let go the painter!"

"Everybody should know that a boat's painter is the rope which makes it fast, but this boy did not know it. He ran aft and let go the ropes by which the painter's staging was held. Meantime the captain was wearied with waiting to be cast off.

"You rascal!" he called. "Why don't you let go the painter?"

"He's gone, sir," said the boy briskly. "He's gone—pots, brushes and all!"—London Standard.

Soon Available.

Scene—Matrimonial agency. Manager and gentleman applicant.

Mat. Agent—You want a wife?

Customer—Yes, sir.

Mat. Agent—Blonde or brunette?

Customer—I am not particular. I insist on but one thing—she must be a divorced woman.

Mat. Agent—Sorry, sir. I have none on hand, but if you can wait a few days I have one in preparation.—The Bohemian.

Tempting Fate.

"What is your line of work? I can see plainly that you are due for a breakdown."

"I guess you're right, doc. I've just written my 400th motor novel."—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

One Cure.

"I believe I'll rock the boat," declared the man in the stern.

"Don't do it," advised his companion, "it might discharge this unloaded pistol I have in my jeans."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

In a little country town, the extreme in fashion always looks fast.

Nothing I Ate Agreed With Me



MRS. LENORA BODENHAMER

Mrs. Lenora Bodenhamer, R. F. D. 1, Box 99, Kernersville, N. C., writes:

"I suffered with stomach trouble and indigestion for some time, and nothing that I ate agreed with me. I was very nervous and experienced a continual feeling of uneasiness and fear. I took medicine from the doctor, but it did me no good.

"I found in one of your Peruna books a description of my symptoms. I then wrote to Dr. Hartman for advice. He said I had catarrh of the stomach. I took Peruna and Manalin and followed his directions and can now say that I feel as well as I ever did.

"I hope that all who are afflicted with the same symptoms will take Peruna, as it has certainly cured me."

The above is only one of hundreds who have written similar letters to Dr. Hartman. Just one such case as this entitles Peruna to the candid consideration of every one similarly afflicted. If this be true of the testimony of one person what ought to be the testimony of hundreds, yes thousands, of honest, sincere people. We have in our files a great many other testimonials.

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A Cooling Thought.

What makes one man warm makes another cool. During the hottest week last summer a gentleman walked into the country store to get his mail. An old "darker" was sitting in the blazing sun, in a rocking chair, on the piazza of the store, looking "as comfortable as a chocolate ice cream." The white man sank into another chair and fanned himself with his limp handkerchief.

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