

A Political Vendetta

By
WELDON J. COBB

CHAPTER XVI.

The big fellow strained and struggled—raining. Then he bent his head, mastiff-like. Bellowing with wrath, he sank his teeth into one imprisoning hand. Hope almost met. In frenzy at the pain, Hope released his other hand. The fellow seized it with both of his own, holding on still with his teeth. Hope was queerly baffled as to the exercise of any free strength.

This was the opportunity of the man in among the trees—he came flying from his covert.

A blunt-edged piece of iron was his weapon. He had full scope—Hope was not only hampered, but had not even seen him approach.

One, two, three—the blows came in rapid succession. The skull bones seemed to crack. At each blow Hope staggered, sank, his head plunging forward—then he was on his knees, and, dragging his first assailant along with him, he struck the ground a huddled, senseless heap.

The big fellow tore himself loose, arose erect, ground his teeth at the prostrate Hope and kicked him with his foot.

"No need of that, partner!" gibbly proclaimed his confederate. "I guess I've done more than bargained for."

"Killed?" exclaimed the other, with a start.

"He looks it," was coolly retorted. Then the speaker stooped and examined the gaping wounds in the back of Hope's head. "No," he announced, "he's got it good and strong, but he's breathing all right. Keep watch."

He began to ransack Hope's pockets, while the other ran his eyes caustically up and down the lane.

Suddenly he uttered an exclamation of decided emphasis and disappointment.

"No!" he said, with fierce fury, arising to his feet.

"He hasn't got the stuff?"

"No cut-in-two bank bills, as said—"

"By Kane!"

"No names!"

"Where are they, then?"

"Maybe at his home—hey?"

"That's got to be found out, you know."

"It has, surely."

"You see to it."

"Yes."

"And be quick."

"As lightning."

They dragged Hope in among the trees, half burying him in a hollow blown full of dead leaves. The giant stood watching him and the road, while his companion disappeared.

He was gone a full hour. The big fellow was uneasy enough before he returned.

"Well?" he challenged, eagerly, the moment his comrade came within hailing distance.

"No good!" growled the other, scowlingly.

"You searched—"

"Everywhere."

"And found?"

"Not a trace."

"Then the stuff's planted!"

"Of course."

"What we going to do?"

"You tell!"

The big fellow stood stupidly rubbing his chin. His associate pulled away the leaves and examined Hope once more. Finally he came up closer to his companion:

"See here," he said, "you listen to me!"

"I'm listening."

"There's no use dallying over this. Kane told us what to do—"

"Yes—get those cut-in-two bills."

"That's it. Now then, this man is laid up, and maybe for a spell."

"What then?"

"We must get him to some place doubly secure."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Where we can mend him up—"

"Ah!"

"And hold him till he tells where he's planted that stuff."

"Ay!"

"I know such a place," the speaker chuckled elusively. "You get a cab, and drive it yourself, and hurry back here, and we'll soon have this gentleman where we can learn his secret at leisure."

"If he tells?"

"He will," confidently proclaimed the other. "He will, or he'll never see sunlight again!"

CHAPTER XVII.

Two, four, six, eight—two, four, six! Over and over, and over again, Gideon Hope counted the paces, till utterance had grown to a maddening mumbled monotone—always the same result—along, across—a grated door, a blank, sealed wall.

Then, too, over the same dim prospect; the heavy oak door beyond one of thickest iron bars, a diamond hole letting in light from some far source down a narrow, desolate hallway.

This was his third day in this den, this prison—that is, his third conscious day—and he knew no more concerning his real whereabouts and environment now than when his senses had first roused to the fact he was a captive.

Hope had a dim memory of the double assault in the lane, and later, after studious reflection, a vague suspicion as to the motive of the same.

The condition of his clothing showed that the assault involved meditated robbery. Yet his personal valuables were intact, and the grim conviction bore upon his mind that the severed bank notes must have been the booty sought for.

Then he readily surmised that Percy Kane must be at the back of this new stroke of villainy. He was equal to it. Such a man had trusty tools at command. The stroke was a royal one. Besides, his own safety demanded that Hope be put out of the way.

"Out of the way" he was! as surely and securely as though entombed in some castle fastness. It was a grim prison in which Hope found himself, and full of mystery.

Twice a day a wooden-faced man of sixty shambled down the corridor, brought food and water, retired. Twice a day for those three wearying days Hope had endeavored to draw the man into conversation, to learn where he was, and why there.

Feigned or sincere, apparent stupidity of glance and demeanor was his mute uniform response—the attendant would not, or could not, hear or speak.

On the morning of the fourth day, as this man left the breakfast tray, Hope noticed that it bore three unfamiliar articles; first, a folded note; second, a blank sheet of paper; third, a lead pencil, sharpened to a fine point.

Eagerly he opened the folded missive. It was unsigned, and the writing was rude and unfamiliar.

Thus it ran: "You have 24 hours to do as directed—or die. On this blank sheet write a plain and correct statement of where you have hidden those 250 half-thousand-dollar notes. If we find them, you go free. If we don't—it's all up with you!"

Now the issue was perfectly plain to the captive. His eye flashed vindictively as he realized that he held the enemy at defiance in one particular; that of the great essential of money.

But this emotion died down and his heart sank dull and spiritless within him as he thought of Claire. What mattered aught else, now that he had doomed her to become legally bound to a monster whose presence must be poison to her life, innocent nature!

So Hope raved, wept, grew moody and desperate to madness by turns, as the slow hours dragged themselves along—so another day passed. To the menacing note only too well understood he vouchsafed no thought or care. The attendant waited for him a moment or two when he came with the food that evening, as if allowing a chance to send an answer, but the prisoner only eyed him with lurid, raged glance, and when he was gone threw himself on the hard, bare bench that was his bed, and lay stolid, and yet acutely suffering, merged in awful thought concerning Kane, torturing self-condemnation when Kane's sad, reproachful face haunted his mind.

He could fancy Kane playing his waiting game. The man cared nothing for reputation, the crimes of the past were to him only useful stepping stones of experience for the future. He was safe from exposure, while he, Hope, was out of the way. His scheme was patent: to wring from his captive the secret of the hiding place of the severed treasury notes.

If this failed, he would certainly tragically remove him from his path. With time given, he could adopt some specious plot to secure at least a few thousands from the Trust wreck. He had Claire, had he not? What more could he wish—taking her to some distant part, and beginning a new course of swindling. This finale well nigh drove Gideon Hope mad.

Suddenly he raised his head and listened. There was a slight clatter in the corridor. Some one was moving about there. Then he heard the words:

"He's asleep. It's late and we'll give him another day to change his mind. Then the red-hot torture irons, if he won't give up the secret of that money reasonably."

Footsteps retreated. Grimly Hope reflected over this new phase of the case. He was certainly in a critical situation, and in bad hands.

Once more he sank to the bench, and once again a foreign sound attracted his notice. It proceeded from one end of the heavy wooden partition evidently separating the apartment he was in from the one adjoining. He moved about. The noise, resembling sawing, ceased. Amid his deep misery Hope forgot all about it, and finally sank into a sudden sleep.

He awoke with a queer sensation, and opened his eyes with a vivid start. His cell held an occupant other than himself. At first, discerning treachery and attack, Hope raised both hands, fists clenched.

But he dropped them, as in the light of faint daybreak he more closely observed the figure standing a foot away from his couch and regarding him fixedly.

It was that of a man about his own age, though very wan and wild-eyed. His attire was disarranged, and he had his head bound up in a cloth, as though injured there. But his pose was friendly.

"Who are you? How did you get in here?" questioned Hope, quickly, springing to his feet and staring vaguely at the intruder.

"Not by the door," answered a hollow, fluttering voice.

"Then—how?" began Hope in profound wonderment. Then succeeded intense curiosity, for the intruder had pointed toward the partition. A square about two feet in size had been cut from the heavy timbers and lay upon the floor, amid a litter of sawdust. The disturbing sound of the night previous was now explained.

Hope was burning with eager desire to interrogate his visitor, to learn of his environment, of the world without, but glancing at a watch he carried, the latter said hurriedly:

"We must not risk talking now. The attendant will soon be here. Set the pieces of board in place as soon as I crawl back through the hole yonder, and brush the sawdust out of sight."

"But—later?"

"As soon as the attendant has retired I will return," promised the other.

He moved about feebly. Hope noticed, as he reclosed the sawed-through boards. The strange occurrence had roused him out of his apathy. He anxiously awaited the arrival of the attendant with the morning meal. No sooner had the man retired than the occupant of the next apartment pushed out the boards and crept into Hope's presence again.

He panted weakly from the exercise, and sat down on the bench to recover his breath. Then he said:

"How long have you been here?"

"A week—more or less."

"And—why?" queried the man, scanning Hope critically. "You don't appear—that is—"

He stumbled in his speech, and stopped dead short.

"Go on!" urged Hope. "Mad, you were going to say?"

"Yes."

"Then this place—"

"Is a mad house, a private insane asylum. Didn't you know that?"

"I half suspected it," answered Hope. "I was, however, brought here while unconscious."

"Then you never was—queer?"

"Not that I know of."

The other shook his head dubiously.

"They are a pretty hard set, on general principles, then," he continued.

"ready to do almost anything for money, I fancy. But your plight is different from mine. I was brought here really a raving maniac."

"You seem rational enough now," suggested Hope, quietly.

"Oh, yes! It was a terrific injury on the head, in a railroad accident, and subsequently fever and delirium, that induced an unskilled surgeon and a careless friend to trust me to the tender mercies of these human harpies here. I was in their hospital room, as they call it, for a week. Then I got sensible enough to be troublesome. They shut me in this terrible prison, a place dreary enough to drive a man really mad—the violent ward!"

"But if you have recovered your reason—"

"I will release me when my friend makes his monthly visit, of course."

"Soon?"

"Day after to-morrow."

"That is not long to wait," remarked Hope, mentally calculating how he could utilize this patient's liberty to bring about his own.

He was amazed as his companion sprang sharply to his feet, an absorbing wildness in his face and manner.

"Long?" he repeated, shrilly—"man!"

If I am not outside these walls, a free man, by another midnight, if a mission I have to perform is not executed before the next day at dawn, I am a lost man, and I shall batter my brain out against these walls, cruel and unrelenting as the stony-hearted monsters who treat my heartbroken pleadings as the ravings of a wild maniac!"

Hope regarded his companion strangely. The man's very soul was in voice and face. There could be no doubt of his urgent rational sincerity.

"I do not understand you," murmured Hope.

"Let me calm myself—let me be calm!" panted the other, placing a shaking hand over his heart. "It is so necessary! You see, I am still physically weak. That is why, when I found the saw, doubtless secreted by some former victim, I cut my way first to this cell, suspecting its occupancy—for I need help, and if I give you your liberty you must swear to help me."

(To be continued.)

Labor-Saving Style.

Mr. Perkins did not often comment on his wife's dress or make suggestions, but one day he looked at her so long and thoughtfully that she inquired if there was anything he did not like about her new gown.

"No, my dear," said Mr. Perkins, hastily "certainly not. I was only thinking. That waist of yours seems to be so elaborate, with the lace and all. Why not have a simpler mode of dress?"

"Why not, indeed?" said Mrs. Perkins, sweetly. "I suppose you've seen one that just pleased you. What was it like?"

"It was white," said her husband; "all white and perfectly plain, my dear, not a particle of lace or ruffling or what I think I have heard you call tucks—nothing of the sort. All there was, my dear, was a simple little braid in flower patterns of some sort. It covered the entire waist."

"I sat beside the lady for half an hour in the car, and I can assure you it was quite neat and attractive. Simmons and I spoke of it on the way up from the train. He said he should mention it to his wife."

"Your poor, ignorant creatures!" said Mrs. Perkins, tenderly. "The days and days it must have taken to make that 'neat, simple, plain little waist!'"

Caught on the Rebound.

"John, dear," said Mrs. Skimpem, as she poured the coffee at the breakfast table, "if I remember rightly, you have often said you disliked to see a woman constantly getting herself into print."

"That's right," rejoined Skimpem.

"You consider it indelicate and unwomanly, don't you?"

"I certainly do."

"And you don't think a sensible man would allow his wife to do anything like that?"

"Most assuredly not."

"Well, John, I'm glad you have such radical views on the subject, because they justify me in asking you for a new silk dress."

"W—what?"

"You heard what I said, John. For the last five years I've had nothing but bargain-counter calico, and I'm tired of getting into print."

And what could poor John do?

Rather Springy.

Restaurant Proprietor—Meat is on the jump these days, sir.

Patron—Well, I should say so.

Restaurant Proprietor—Yes, those porterhouse steaks you have been ordering have jumped 3 cents in three days.

Patron—Yes, and the last one you served me was so tough it jumped three feet from the table, before I could cut it.

Plausible.

Mrs. Giles (reading)—A scientist now comes forward with the theory that Jonah was swallowed by an earthquake instead of by a whale.

Giles—Well, that is a plausible theory. Instead of a fish it was a fissure.



Silage in Steer Feeding.

The use of silage in feeding steers while fattening is growing in favor steadily, and especially where lands are high priced and when feeding stuffs generally are high. There has been a good deal of prejudice against silage among extensive feeders, but as they are induced to try it so do they become converted to its use.

In feeding experiments conducted at the Missouri Station in 1900-7 with steers weighing about 800 pounds each at the beginning, those fed silage ate less dry matter than those fed whole stover or shredded stover, and gained in weight, while the dry stover lots lost. The same sort of results were also secured from feeding silage stover compared with air-dried material.

Professor Plumb, of the Ohio Agricultural College, has this to say on the subject:

"If silage is fed under cover, and to cattle not wallowing in mud or oozy manure, then good results will generally come from its use. However, hay or other dry roughage should also be fed. Silage fed twice a day and hay once should give good results. When cattle are being finished for shipment, then the amount of silage fed should be reduced and the dry roughage increased, this to prevent much shrinkage in shipping. However, in what is known as rational feeding, but little shrinkage is apt to occur from the use of the silage. In experiments with steers fed different rations at the Virginia Station, those fed silage showed no appreciable shrinkage in the market over those fed exclusively dry feed."

Crib Without a Shovel.

This grain storage house is designed to allow for handling the crop without unnecessary lifting. Grain is hauled in the upper drive and poured from the wagons into the bins, and is then removed by being drained from the bins into the lower driveway. If built upon a hillside the job of making the fills will not be serious. Even on level ground this can be done without a great expenditure of labor with the use of a road scraper.

The entire building must be raised upon piers about 4 ft. high, so that the bottom of the bins is not much

lower than the bottom of the wagon box, allowing the entire contents of the bins to be drained into the wagon without lifting.—Farm and Home.

The Poultry House.

Now is a good time to disinfect the poultry house, so as to keep the lice from getting a mastery over you. Any kind of liquid lice killer is good to spray the house with, being sure to spray the roosts and nest boxes as well. If a cheaper disinfectant is required, a whitewash can be made of lime and water, with some crude carbolic acid in it. This proves a very good deodorizer and disinfectant, and a large quantity of it can be used without hurting the pocketbook too severely.

Wounds on Trees.

No artificial medium can be applied to the surface of a tree wound which will induce it to heal more quickly. The activity of the healing process depends upon the character and position and the time of the year when the wound is made, rather than upon protective coverings, but where a large surface of heart wood is exposed it is advisable to protect it from decay by a coat of white lead or other satisfactory covering.

Milk for Calves.

The calf finds in fresh milk while it is still warm with the animal heat of the cow, it is said, a constituent value not found in the milk after it is allowed to get cold. The chemist cannot define it, and it cannot be restored again by warming the milk. If every calf could be fed its milk sweet, and while it still retained its animal heat, there would no doubt be fewer cat-hammed steers going to the block.

The Sweet Potato Belt.

The northern limit for sweet potato culture is roughly indicated by a line drawn from the border line of Massachusetts and Connecticut on the east coast westward to the northeast corner of Colorado, but the area where it is profitable commercially would be considerably south of this, except in the Mississippi valley, where it extends well into Iowa, Illinois and Indiana.

The Potato.

Recently, in Hartz, Germany, a monument was found bearing this inscription: "Here, in the year 1747, the first trials were made with the cultivation of the potato." By the way, when Frederick II. introduced the potato into his domain his subjects did not like it; they refused to be bothered with it, and the emperor had to force them to cultivate it.

In Tying Chickens.

When marketing chickens do not tie several of them together. They get the strings twisted around their legs and it cuts them. Take the chickens to town in a coop, or some other humane way. They are in absolute torture when several are tied together.

How Seeds Are Scattered.

Dr. Howard, secretary of the American Society for the Advancement of Science, writing of the manner in which seeds are carried to great distances by birds, recites an experiment of Darwin which had a curious result. Adhering to the leg of a wounded partridge, Darwin found a ball of earth, weighing six and a half ounces. From the seeds contained in this ball he raised thirty-two plants, belonging to five distinct species.

To Keep the Cellar Dry.

In many farmhouses the cellar is not cemented, so that when heavy rains come in the spring water is apt to make trouble. There is just one way to keep such a cellar dry, and that is by putting in a cement floor, and thorough drainage for the outside of the walls. Better cement it now.

How to Raise a Barn.

A farmer near Goliad had a novel experience. A few years ago he built a small barn, and in the construction used green willow posts at the corners and along the sides. For some time nothing unusual was noticed, but after a year he saw that where he had laid the floor near the ground it was three feet above soil. He discovered that the willow posts, instead of being dead, were alive, had taken root and were growing. In their upward movement they had carried the barn along. Last spring the barn was on stilts 9 feet high, and he put in a new floor and surrounded the posts with siding, thereby making a two-story affair. There is now a space of 9 inches between the floor and the ground, and the owner expects to have a three-story barn in the course of time.—Goliad, (Texas) Guard.

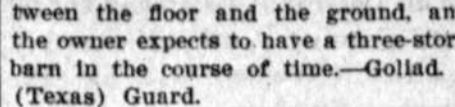
Value of Potatoes as Food.

According to statistics obtained, it appears that potatoes constitute about 13 per cent of the total food consumed by the average family. They are essentially starchy and eaten alone would furnish a very one-sided badly

balanced diet that would prove unwholesome to most people. As indicated in the illustration the edible portion, is made up of 78.3 per cent water, 18.4 per cent carbohydrates (principally starch), 2.2 per cent protein, 0.1 per cent fat, and 1 per cent ash or mineral matter. These figures represent general averages from which there are wide variations in individual specimens. When potatoes are eaten with meat, eggs, or fish, which are essentially nitrogenous foods, a well-balanced diet is obtained.

COMPOSITION OF THE POTATO.

A, fat; b, crude fibre and other carbohydrates exclusive of starch; c, protein; d, ash.



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Salt for Cows.

A supply of salt available whenever the cow wants it is necessary to maintain a high milk yield. Salt stimulates the appetite and assists digestion and assimilation, which increase the flow of the fluids of the body. Salting feeds for dairy cows once a week is not sufficient. It is a good plan to keep rock salt under shelter where the cows can get it at will and then feed loose salt once a week in such quantities as the cows will eat. Loose salt may be used exclusively if it can be sheltered from rain. Do not mix salt with feed, for frequently cows get more salt than they need, which will reduce the flow of milk. Cows having salt kept before them at all times in separate compartments will not eat too much.

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