

THE BOSSIER BANNER.

R. B. Hill Oct 17

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FIFTY-FIFTH YEAR.

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THE NEW CLARION

By... WILL N. HARBEN

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CHAPTER XXI. Suspicions.

Now, the matter is like this," continued Pole, "an' I want you to think hard on it, fer I'm all hauled up an' hardly know what I believe an' what I don't believe. Now, in the first place, it is impossible to even start on a hunt like this unless you have some little thing of some particular person to aim at. Now, I've got this much to start on, an' it is all I have got. The Lord knows it is small enough when you realize that you may be suspectin' an innocent man an' one without a dollar to defend hisself with. You remember the day Howard an' Craig met in town an' had that row? Well, that mornin', just as Craig was startin' off to town, I happened to be in Trumbley's piece of woodland on the slope overlookin' Craig's farm. I was up thar to see about some trees I'd agreed to cut down and stack up in cords for Trum-

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bley's winter supply. Well, I see Craig leave his less at the barn an' walk across his field to whar Abe Fulton was makin' a wire fence fer 'im. The truth is, I tuck no particular notice of 'em, an' the distance was so great that I couldn't see their faces good nor hear what was said, but somehow it struck me at the time that they was havin' words.

"Whether it was their motions or looks or what not I don't know, but, anyway, I remem'er that the first thought that popped into my head after Craig's mixup with Howard was that Craig had quarreled with Abe an' that was one reason he was so ready to pounce on somebody else. But I didn't let the thing weigh much with me at the time, fer, you see, I was followin' the other scent, but after that failed I tuck up the other an' tried to see if I could connect Abe with the killin'."

"An' did you—did you, that's the question? Abner's lower lip was quivering under tense suspense. His bushy brows had met.

"I don't know, Uncle Ab; as God is my final judge, I don't," Pole returned, "an' that's why I've come to you. All I could do was this: I went by Craig's field an' saw that the fence wasn't finished, but I couldn't say that meant anything, fer Craig was slow pay, an' no sensible person would keep on workin' fer a dead man without knowin' who was his boss, anyway."

"No, of course not," Abner agreed. "Was that all?"

"No, not quite. I next set out to look fer Abe. I seed 'im in a bunch of loafers at the cotton press, whar jobs by the hour was give out fer truckin' an' loadin' an' the like. I knowed most of 'em. All the time Abe set on a bale of cotton whittlin' a stick an' sayin' nothin'. I noticed that he wouldn't laugh much along with the balance, but when I came to think of it I couldn't remember ever seein' the cuss smile or pass a joke now, an' so, you see, I couldn't go by that. I studied 'im a good hour. I got the crowd to talk about the murder once, an' I watched Abe, but I couldn't notice that he acted any different from the rest. He jest set with his feet crossed an' the brim of his hat over his eyes an' trimmed straight in front of 'im."

"I see, I see," Abner nodded, thoughtfully.

"I set about in a sly, underhand way among folks that had knowed Abe a long time, to see if he'd ever been in any difficulties. Now, here comes the only pint I've found worth considerin', an' I want yore opinion. Ten years ago, when Abe lived over the mountain, he was arrested an' tried fer assault on a feller an' put in jail fer a year. The feller who he mighty nigh killed owned a little sawmill whar Abe was workin', an' one day at log rollin' the sawmill man got mad at Abe fer some blunder or other an' kicked 'im like a dog in the presence of all the rest. Now, watch close, Uncle Ab. Witnesses said on oath at the trial that Abe tuck his kickin' without a word. He rolled logs on the rest of the day an' drawed his pay; but that night evidence showed that he waylaid the sawmill man, beat 'im over the head with a hickory club an' left 'im unconscious in the road."

"It is some'n' anyway," Abner answered interestedly. "Let's go yonder, have a chew and plan this thing further," Abner continued.

One sultry evening at dusk, as Abner sat talking to Mary about Howard in the front yard, Abe Fulton trudged along past the gate, a small bag of flour on his shoulder. He did not look toward them, but kept his eyes on the dusty road. Seeing that Mary was looking at the man, Abner remarked casually:

"That feller looks like he is purty hard up. He had a regular job workin' fer Craig, but that's all off now, of course."

"I'm sorry for his wife," Mary said listlessly. "I don't believe the poor creature gets enough to eat half the time, and as for clothes, she is a pitiful sight. I've heard that she is constantly complainin'."

At this instant Mrs. Trumbley called Mary into the house, and Abner was left alone. Going to the gate, he looked after the disappearing figure he had just noted; then he glanced back into the house. "Might as well now as later," he mused. "Time is valuable, an' after all Pole may be away off the track. Twenty men could 'a' done the thing as well as this 'un."

Taking a cautious look into the house, Abner slipped around the corner and went down the path to the stable. Opening the door of a stall containing his favorite horse, he took the animal by the forelock and led it across the lot to a gate, which he opened. Then, raising his hands threateningly, he drove the horse through, watching it as it galloped off into the woods. Then going to a wagon shed near by Abner took a bridle from a row of saddles and halters, and with it on his arm he passed through the gate and started down the road, the leather reins dragging in the dust at his side. Half a mile farther on he turned aside into the wood and walked through the twilight till he saw a gleam of fire through the trees and knew it was from the cabin occupied by Abe Fulton and his wife. Here Abner began to walk more slowly, and as he moved toward the light he whistled loudly after the manner of farmers calling their horses. Presently he emerged from the low, scattering bushes immediately in front of the cabin. Mrs. Fulton came to the door, her hands white with some dough she was mixing.

"Lost yore hoss, Mr. Daniel?" she asked as she recognized him and noticed the bridle in his hand.

"Yes, have you seed 'im?" Abner came closer. "He's the very devil to

slip a halter when he's hitched to a post. He farn't the trick, somehow, an' I hain't never broke 'im out of it."

"No, I hain't noticed a loose boss of any sort," the woman answered. "May be Abe has; he's just come from town, Say, Abe—she's turned to look into the cabin—have you seed anything of Mr. Daniel's hoss?"

There was no immediate answer, but a crunching tread came from within, and Abe slouched forward into the doorway. Abner remarked a certain restless stare in the man's eyes and fancied that he saw a hunted look of despair in the almost brutal face.

"No, I hain't seen no hoss," Abe said. "Excuse me; I smell my bacon a-burnin'." Mrs. Fulton exclaimed suddenly. "Abe, give Mr. Daniel a chair. I'll bet he's tired."

Abe went into the cabin and brought out a crude, splint-bottomed chair, and when Abner had taken it he sat down on a wash bench near by.

"Yes, I think I'll do indoor work that does me up," Abner went on glibly. "A feller that's lived on a farm all his life makes a poor out at a job like my new one." I acted the plumb fool when I put good money in that plant. But you know, of course, that I was countin' on Howard Tinsley to run it fer me; but, in me, considerin' the plight the boys' got hisself in, that's all off, an' I've got the bag to hold, green as I am."

The man tapped the toe of his ragged shoe with the battling stick. He swallowed, glanced furtively at Abner and cleared his throat. Presently, with a wavering glance, he jerked out:

"He'll come out all right."

"Humph! I say," Abner sniffed. "what makes you think that, Abe?"

"Oh, because feller like him always does clear," Howard's got influential kin, an' he stands at the top. The courts are a sort of joke an' so is the general run of 'em. A feller jest has to have a little pull in politics, a few dollars behind 'im an' wear good clothes to get out of anything."

"I wish you was right; I really do," Abner answered. "You ain't as old as I am by a long sight, Abe." Abner's tone had never been so confidential and friendly. "You ain't seed as much of lawin', Billy Barnett, as you may know, is as keen a practitioner as the state has got. I've reigned him, an' he's workin' with might an' main on the case, but him nor me nor all the law in the world can't do a thing as long as Howard holds out as he is doin'."

"Holds out?" For the first time the glance of the small eyes sought Abner's inquiringly. "What do you mean by holdin' out?"

Abner seemed to hesitate, and when he finally spoke it was as if he had decided that he might fall deeper into confidence with a man whom he trusted.

"Why, Abe, just between you an' me, I'm afraid that the boy's bullheaded stubbornness is goin' to block all our efforts in his behalf. You know the law well enough. All of us know the law well enough to know that the courts are lenient when a man comes right out an' admits that he done a wrong thing. I'm talkin' to you now as a friend an' a neighbor. In fact, I've heard Howard say lots of nice things about you an' yore wife, an' I know you are interested in his welfare, an' will hate to hear how he is actin'. But the truth is—the sad truth is—that he won't listen to reason. Talk as we will, the boy sticks to his plan of claimin' that he knows nothin' at all about the shootin'."

"Well, maybe he don't!" burst impulsively from the man on the bench. "A feller ain't guilty till he's proved guilty."

Abner's eyes gleamed.

"I'm glad to hear you stand up fer 'im, anyway, Abe," Abner went on snarvely; "but, nevertheless, I wouldn't like fer you to talk to him on that line. Thar's too much evidence agin' 'im."

"Yes, I have—that is, I've heard folks talk. I know all they are a-sayin'. I—I don't blame Howard. He—he'd be a fool to say he done it unless—unless he done it, no matter what you an' Barnett advise. Life's too short. Huh, of Howard claims he didn't do it, maybe he didn't. He's always treated me fair. The boy lent me some money once when I couldn't git it from any body else."

"Oh, yes, Howard has a big heart in 'im, an' this is killin' 'im. You only have to think about it, Abe, to see how humiliated he must be. He was jest gittin' a firm foothold in his line. The papers all over the state was talkin' about him an' his work. Darley is right now gittin' on a boom which Howard set afoot. A new railroad is comin', a site has been selected an' bought in the edge of town fer a cotton mill with thousands of spindles that will give employment to mountain folks fer miles around. But right in the middle of it the silly boy lets his hot temper git the best of 'im. He has a few words with a feller that nobody liked an' then waylays 'im an' shoots 'im dead in his tracks, an', of course—well, he'll have to take his medicine, that's all."

"I don't believe Howard done it," Fulton blurted, "because you say he says he didn't."

"What you believe don't settle the matter," Abner said, as if contemptuous of an opinion which seemed so ill grounded. "Howard can't prove nothin' at all to offset the evidence p'intin' up mountain high agin' 'im. Lawyers, judges an' experts generally are laughin' at his stupidity in holdin' out like he is doin'. You ain't entirely alone my. You'd hardly expect that broken hearted woman to doubt the word of her only child, an' I wouldn't talk as free with her as I have to you. Ef she sees it to believe Howard's cock an' bull yarn about sleepin' on that mountain an' all the rest he made up—well, that's jest her right. Then thar is an-

other one that won't listen to reason nuther, an' that is Mary Trumbley. I don't know fer sure, but I imagine of this calamity hadn't fallen them two would 'a' hit it off together. La, Abe, thar's the pitiful! I think sometimes of shed's jest jine me an' Billy in advisin' Howard to tell the whole truth that he might be influenced to own up before it is too late."

"He'd be a fool to do it," Abe muttered.

"Well, have it yore way," Abner sighed. "After all, Abe, Craig was an overbearin' man, wasn't he? You done some work fer 'im now an' then an' ort to know as to that. I remember seein' you folks his place. Ef he was as bad as folks say you'd know it, I reckon?"

"He was a devil on human legs!" Abe's eyes were flaring indignantly. "He deceived several young gals that I knowed. One was a fust cousin o' mine, a pore orphan, with nobody to take her part. He got 'er love some way, an' after he'd left 'er high an' dry fer another gal she used to hang around the woods tryin' to see the skunk. She broke down an' told me all about it. Oh, I knowed 'im!"

CHAPTER XXII. Making Progress.

That must have been Susy Thomas," Abner said to Abe. "I remember her. She had a sad, sweet face. I didn't know she was any kin o' yore'n, though, Abe. It must 'a' been on yore mammy's side."

"She was the youngest one o' the children my mother's sister Molly left when she died," Abe answered. "How Craig managed to fool 'er as he did I don't know. He was old enough to be her daddy an' as quarrelsome as a bear. Oh, I know a lot more that I could tell you, but I jest can't."

"She certainly was to be pitied," Abner was looking away at the sky in the west, which still held a faint red glow of the passing daylight. "I haven't seen 'er, though, fer several months now."

"You never will ag'in," Abe said, his great breast rising high and falling.

"Oh, is that so?" Abner went on. "Then she's left the country?"

"Yes, the Norton family—folks that had been good to 'er an' overlooked her misfortune—was movin' out to Texas on a farm. They didn't like to leave 'er so destitute, an' they said they thought maybe a change of climate would do 'er good an' in time make 'er forget Craig."

"Well, I hope it did 'er good, Abe."

"There was just a hint of delay in Fulton's response. Then his face darkened, and his voice quivered under a flood of passion. "She died," he said. "The medicine—the operation—or whatever it was killed her. Mrs. Norton wrote me all about it. Susy suffered awful. She was in her right mind up to the very last minute. She sent me a message—said I was the only livin' kin she ever had that had treated her half decent."

"How God could let a man like Craig live as long as he did is a wonder to me," Abner said. "I feel better about Howard's case now than I did, Abe, an' I'm glad I run across you. La, ef Susy Thomas had jest 'a' been his fust cousin now a jury would clear 'im without leavin' 'er's seat. Ef I was on a jury in a case like that I'd git 'em to give three whoopin' cheers fer the accused, an' we'd ride 'im out o' court on our shoulders an' take 'im in triumph from one end o' town to t'other. But pore Howard, he hain't got no claim like that to help 'im out!"

"I don't believe Howard done it," Abe said, a futile stare in his eyes. "You say he claims he didn't, an' that

in town are hit hard an' wonderin' ef the estate will pay out, mortgaged as it is up to the hilt. I reckon he owed you some'n' along with the balance?"

"For a month's hard work, more or less," was the answer, "but I'll not put in no claim. I don't want no lawsuit."

"I'd git my rights, Abe," Abner said. "You owe it to yore wife. Let's see, when did you see 'im last, Abe?"

"Me? Why? Abe's eyelashes flickered. "Le'me think. Why, the last time was as he was startin' off to town the day that—Abe failed to finish, droppin' his glance to the ground."

"I know," Abner prompted him; "the day him an' Howard had the fuss on the street."

"Yes, that was the time," Fulton answered unsuspectingly. "He was hossback an' an' drinkin', as usual."

"I see he rid by here."

Abe cast a vacant look at the placid questioner, then he nodded. "Yes, I was at the pen thar feedin' my pig. I reckon it was about 8 o'clock or a little after. He—he could hardly set in the saddle. I wasn't surprised when I heard about the fuss, 'er wife. Let's see, it was a little bit out o' his most direct way to come by here, wasn't it?" Abner's tone was even and careless. "The bee line way from his house to town is by Trumbley's, ain't it?"

"I don't know," Abe said, slightly disturbed by the demand. "It may be shorter by Trumbley's. Anyway, Craig was too drunk to know which way he was goin'."

"The administrator will not git much fer his farm in the condition it's in," Abner remarked casually. "I happened to notice that he started you to buildin' a new wire fence. I reckon you never finished it, not knowin' whar yore wages would come from now that he's dead."

"I throwed that job up," Abe flashed out impulsively. "He wouldn't plank down a cent, although I was out o' grub. He come over to whar I was at work that last mornin' an' cussed me black an' blue fer makin' a little mistake. After he rid off I shouldered my tools an' quit."

"I see," Abner spat straight toward the freighth, slowly rose to his feet, his hands in his pockets, the bridle thrown over his shoulder. "An' Craig rid straight off to town an' had his fuss with Howard. His little tiff with you started 'im out fer the day, an' he wanted to git back at somebody."

"Yes, I heard that evenin' that he'd jumped on Howard," Abe fell into the trap. "Craig didn't care fer man, God nor devil."

"That time in the field was the very last you seed of 'im alive," Abner remarked adroitly.

"The very last time," Abe said unguardedly.

"But let's see. Didn't I hear you to say, Abe," Abner remarked, now staring steadily, "that the last sight you had of 'im was while you was at that pigpen thar an' he rid by goin' to town?"

Fulton's beetling brows met in a frown of perplexity. "Did I say that?" he asked. "That must 'a' been another time. My memory ain't as good as it used to be."

"Mine ain't nuther," Abner threw his shoulders back and yawned. "Well, I must be goin'."

Down the road, when in sight of Trumbley's barn, Abner saw Pole Baker.

"A purty tramp you been havin', Uncle Ab," he began, with a smile. "You went exactly the wrong direction. I seed yore hoss just now back o' my place. He's thar yit nibblin' at a fine patch of grass. G' me yore bridle. I'm spryer 'n you are in the legs, ef I ain't smarter in the head, an' I never yit seed a hoss I couldn't halter."

Abner gave the bridle to him, and as Pole bore it briskly away he stroiled on homeward. Ten minutes later, as Abner stood waiting at the gate of the lot, Pole rode up on the bare back of the horse, his legs swinging to and fro from the animal's flanks. He laughed in a significant way as he slid down to the ground.

"Fer a wild, runaway hoss," he said, "this 'un was the easiest to catch I ever run across. He come up to me of his own accord, jest the same as to say, 'Ef you an' Uncle Ab are through playin' tag with me I'll go home to bed.'"

"Humph!" Abner said, his mind evidently far away, as he opened the gate and let the horse loose in the lot.

"You kin sniff ef you want to," Pole said, with a meaning smile. "I ain't a-goin' to pry into yore business, though I'll admit I'm losin' sleep over the very thing you are thinkin' about at this minute. Ridin' back jest now it struck me that a feller o' yore wide experience wouldn't meander off on a bare, rocky hillside lookin' fer a hoss that's out after grass when you know mighty well that it grows on low ground. You mought be an' say you'd already been whar I found the hoss, but that wouldn't pass my Adam's apple, fer I seed from the grass that had been topped in one spot that the hoss had been thar a good while."

"You are gittin' awfully sharp, Pole," Abner said with a sudden smile. "You said t'other night on the mountain that thar was some delicate things I could work better 'n you. I don't believe it."

"I know whar you've been," Pole said eagerly. "You've been to see Abe Fulton. You have been, hain't you, old man?"

Abner nodded silently, the worried expression stealing back into his face.

"I knowed it!" Pole cried triumphantly. "Well, what's yore opinion? Is it likely that Abe done it?"

"I think he did, Pole," Abner answered slowly. "I am purty sure he done it, but that don't git us out of the mire by a long shot."

"You say it don't?" Pole's voice sank and a shadow crossed his face.

"No, it don't," Abner went on. "I've

read an' heard o' big cases, Pole, whar sharp detective work was done with plumb success, but in all of 'em thar was outside happenin's, an' facts to pick up an' piece together till the man was tied hand and foot, but in this case, Pole, the truth lies away down in the heart of a single human bein'. In my opinion Abe is the feller that done the deed, but it is jest my private opinion, an' that ain't with a stray when it comes as an offset to all the facts agin' Howard."

After Abner left him Abe Fulton remained seated on the wash bench, his head dejectedly lowered. Presently his wife appeared in the doorway.

"Supper was ready some time ago," she announced, "but I didn't want to call you while Mr. Daniel was here. We hain't got nothin' fit to offer 'im, nor no plates or decent cups and saucers. I wish you'd buy some, Abe. You have no idea how 'shamed a woman feels in a pinch like this."

"I overheard part o' whar Mr. Daniel was sayin' about Howard Tinsley," Mrs. Fulton said as she sat down and filled his plate with the young corn and cabbage, which was boiled with pork and gave forth an appetizing smell. "He's sensible, a sight more so than the boy's mammy, who still claims he never done it. You can't fool a man like Abner Daniel. He knows thar ain't no use contendin' ag'in plain facts, an' he knows that the shortest way out o' the trouble is to tell the truth. Folks love to see a man brave enough to tell the truth in such a case, an' the court would deal lighter with Howard ef he'd listen to advice like Mr. Daniel could give."

"Nobody knows all about it," Abe let his full fork rest on his plate. "Nobody but—but the one most concerned could know it all. I'm—I'm sorry fer Howard Tinsley myself, so I am."

"Well, he ortn't to be bulldozed an' hold back from sensible advice," the woman answered.

Mrs. Fulton went to the hearth for some more food and failed to notice that her husband was not eating as freely as usual. He was swallowing his food in a mechanical way, not paying any attention to her. She came back, sat down and reached out for his plate. He extended it automatically. He was very pale, but in the red firelight the fact was not observable.

Continued in next week's Banner.

Kelly the Dandy.

Eccentrics have flourished in every age, but possibly they were at their height in the days of George III, and the regency, when to be old was considered fashionable. Take the case of Lieutenant Colonel Kelly of the (then) First Foot guards, who was a very vain, emaciated looking dandy, but at the same time a gentleman. "He was haughty in the extreme and very fond of dress. His boots were so well varnished that the polish now in use could not surpass Kelly's blacking in brilliancy. His pantaloons were made of the finest leather, and his coats were imitable. In short, his dress was considered perfect."

Kelly was burned to death while trying to save his favorite boots, and the story goes that the dandies competed among themselves to secure the services of his valet, who knew the secret of the blacking. Brunnel was one of the competitors, but the man told him that the £150 a year he had been accustomed to receive was not enough for his talent and that he should require £200, upon which the Beau replied, "Well, if you will make it guineas I shall be happy to attend upon you."—Westminster Gazette.

Alaska's Natural Submarines.

The channels of the Alaskan waterways vary as you sail on to the northward. Now they widen into great lakes; now they are rivers as narrow as the Hudson or Rhine. At times you pass through gorges walled by islands and the mainland, and at times you are in flocks like those formed by the half sunken Andes along western Patagonia, near the strait of Magellan. This part of our territory is made up of the heads of submerged mountains, and in places there are great rocks as steep, as high and as sharp as the Washington monument, which come within twenty or thirty feet of the surface. These are terrible pinnacle rocks that rip open the hulls of the steamers. They are searched for and marked with buoys by the wire drag of our coast and geodetic survey.—Christian Herald.

Canny Human Skill.

The ocean comes up and smashes our beaches and our piers; the wind blows down old houses and walls and trees; the rain fills up creek beds and basements and comes up over the floors of stores, with some damage to silks and sugar. It is all very big and scary and horrendous, but still the puny human climbs quietly into his dry street car, the antique commuter crawls aboard his chip sided ferryboat, the steamer swings and dances through the typhoon, and the cigar box office building laughs at the racket and the fuss. There is skill behind the car, the boat, the building; canny human skill that keeps cool and is not to be bluff even by the winds and waters of the earth, and nature may lose its temper all it wants; it loses it quite fruitlessly.—San Francisco Bulletin.

He Was Right.

A man rushed to the entrance of a lunatic asylum in the middle of the night and yelled to the keeper to let him in.

"Let me in!" he cried. "I have suddenly gone insane."

The keeper woke up, thrust his head out of a first story window and belittled down in a rage:

"What? Come here at this time of night? Man, you must be crazy!"—Brooklyn Eagle.



"I git my rights, Abe," Abner said.

ought to settle it with any reasonable thinkin' person. His word ort to be enough."

"His word ain't worth a hill o' beans in the matter," Abner said contemptuously. "In fact, he won't be allowed to testify. He kin make a statement, you know, an' the jury kin respect it or not, as it sees fit. But they won't respect Howard's tale on top o' all that has happened. Craig had a bad temper an' tried several times to wipe his feet on the boy. Howard knowed that a bad stripe he an' was despised 'im an' said so time after time. All that will go agin the boy at the trial, 'er he had plenty o' time to deliberate 'fore actin'. I reckon Craig was rough with yore too, Abe. He was with everybody else he dealt with."

"Huh! Me? I was dirt under his lordly feet."

"He was slow pay, too. I've always heard," Abner said. "The storekeepers