

CALEB CONOVER

RAILROADER



A STORY OF LOVE, POLITICS, INTRIGUE,
OF A RICH & POWERFUL BOSS
AND AN INTREPID YOUNG
REFORMER.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE.
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"Well," vouchsafed Caleb, grudgingly, "that's an answer anyhow, and it comes nearer being sense than anything you've said so far. But you're wrong for all that. You talk about honesty. What's honesty? The pious Pilgrim Fathers came here and swindled old Lo, the poor Indian, out of his country in a blamed sight more raw fashion than I've ever bamboozled the people of the Mountain State. And the Mountain Staters were willing while the Indian wasn't. Yet the old settlers are called 'nation builders' and 'martyrs,' and a lot of other hot-air titles, and they get statues put up to their memories. How about the Uncle Sam's buying a whole nation of Filipinos and coolly telling 'em: 'I'm bossing your islands now. Listen to me while I soften your rebellious hearts with the blessed gospel of the gatling gun.' Yet Uncle Sam's all right. So's John Bull, who done the same trick, only worse, in India and Egypt. No one's going to call America or England or the Pilgrim Fathers dishonest and crooks, is there? Then why do you call Caleb Conover dishonest for doing the same thing, only a lot more squarely and mercifully? The crook of to-day is the hero of tomorrow. And I'm no crook at that. Why, son, a hundred years from now there's liable to be a statue stuck up somewhere of 'Caleb Conover, Railroader, Champion of the People,' Honesty, eh? What you call 'honesty' is just a sort of weak-kneed virtue meaning lack of chance to be something else. 'Honesty' than me means 'less chance than me.' The honestest community on earth, according to you reformers' way of thinking, is in the State Penitentiary. For not a crime of any sort's committed there from one's year's end to the other."

Be wiser this time. I enclose a list of the County Chairmen who have sold out to Conover, the name of the Chairman to be chosen for next week's State Convention, and a rough draft of the plan to be used for your defeat. Next to each detail you will find my suggestion for blocking it. You owe it to yourself and to the people to take advantage of what I send you.

"He's right, whoever he is!" exclaimed Clive, half-afraid. "It's the only way I can fight Conover on equal terms. There's no sense in my standing on a foolish scruple when so much hangs on the result of the Convention."

He snatched up the enclosure which had slipped to the floor. Irresolute he held it for almost a minute, his firm lips twitching, his eyes cloudy with perplexity. Then, with a sigh of self-contempt he slipped note and enclosure in a long envelope, addressed it and rang for his man.

"See that this is delivered to-night," he ordered.

The valet, as he left the room, glanced surreptitiously at the envelope's address. To his infinite bewilderment he saw the superscription: "Caleb Conover, Esq., 167 Pompton Avenue, Personal."

There was a terrible half hour in the Mausoleum that night.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Convention and a Revelation.

THE day of the State Convention! The Convention Hall at Granite was a big-barn-like building, frequently used for church and school entertainments, and occasionally giving temporary home to some struggling theatrical company. For the holding of the convention which was to name the Governor of the Mountain State a feeble attempt at decorating the vast interior had been made by Conover's State chairman.

There was the usual noise and tramping of feet and clamoring of brass bands, the customary rabble of uniformed campaign clubs with their gaudy banners and pompous drum-majors about the hall and in it, for an hour before the time that had been set for the calling of the convention. Here, there and everywhere circled busy lieutenants of Boss Conover. Their master, with a little coterie of chosen lieutenants moved early into his headquarters in one of the rooms at the rear of the stage, where he sat like some wise old spider in the heart of his web, sending out warps, as, advice and admonitions to his under-strappers.

Conover felt calmly confident of the result. Even had Standish been the choice of a majority of the people in all eight counties of the State, it would have availed him little, for through the routine tricks whereof the Railroader was past master, his young opponent was at the last able to control the votes of but two counties—Matawan and Wills.

Standish's contesting delegates from the other six counties sat sullen and grim in the gallery. Fraudulent Conover delegates, who had usurped the former's places by the various ruses so successfully put into action at the caucuses, held the credentials and occupied the seats belonging by rights to the Leagueurs on the floor of the Convention Hall. There the Machine delegates smilingly sat awaiting the moment when they should name their Boss as candidate for Governor.

From the seats of the usurpers there went up a merry howl of derision as Standish's two little blocks of delegates from Matawan and Wills marched in and took their places well down in front, where they formed a pitifully small oasis among the Conover delegates from Bowden, Carney, Haldane, Jericho, Sparta and Pompton counties.

There was no cheering by the Standish delegates on the floor of the convention. Nine out of ten knew that it was practically a hopeless fight into which they were about to plunge.

Karl Ansel, with an inscrutable grin on his long, leathery face, might have sat for a picture of a typical poker player, as he slipped into his place at the head of the Wills County delegation.

Standish was nowhere in sight. Following the ordinary laws of campaign etiquette, he did not show himself before the delegates in advance of the nomination; but, like Conover, sat in temporary headquarters behind the stage. About him were a little knot of Civic Leagueurs. One and all they were Job's comforters, for they knew it would take a miracle now to snatch the nomination from the Railroader's grip.

Promptly at twelve o'clock Shellin, in his newly acquired capacity of State Chairman, called the convention to order. He had judiciously distributed bunches of his best trained shouters where they would do the most good. They cheered when he named the secretaries and assistant secretaries who would act until the permanent organization had been effected.

And between times they cheered just for the joy of cheering.

Both sides knew that the first and last test of strength would come upon the selection of Committee on Credentials, since it was to this committee that the contests of the six larger counties for the right to sit in the convention would go for settlement. Previous conventions had always decided that delegates whose seats were contested should not be allowed to sit as members of the Committee on Contested Seats. Clive Standish innocently supposed this rule would be adhered to by his convention. He was wrong. Conover had no Quixotic notion of giving his rival any such advantage. The night before he had decreed that the chairman should rule that this Committee on Contests should consist of three members from each county, and that these members should be chosen by the sitting delegates from each county. This meant that the committee would stand eighteen delegates for Conover and six for Standish. And so it was, Chairman Bourke ruled exactly as Conover had dictated.

When the convention understood the purport of it all the maddest uproar broke out. All semblance of order was lost. A dozen fist fights started simultaneously. A longshoreman—Conover district captain from one of the "railroad" wards of Granite—wittily spat in the face of a vociferating little farmer from Wills County, and then stepped back with a bellow of laughter at his own powers of repartee. But others understood the gentle art of "retort courteous" almost as well as he. Losing for once his inherited New England calm, Karl Ansel drove his big gnarled fist flush into the grinning face of the dock-rat, and sent him whirling backward amid a splintering of broken seats.

Ansel, smarting and past all control, ploughed his way down the main aisle, and halting below the stage, shook his clenched fist at Caleb Conover's crayon likeness.

"I've seen forty pictures of Juads Iscariot in my time," he thundered, apostrophizing the portrait in a nasal voice that rose high above the clamor, "and no two of them looked alike. But by the Eternal, they all were the living image of YOU!"

Then he went down under an avalanche of Conover rowdies, giving and taking blows as he was borne headlong to the floor. At the cost of a brief interim of fruitless rioting, the Machine at last had its way. Standish had but six members on the committee.

The contest was over.

The Standish delegates offered but a perfunctory opposition to the work of choosing the Committees on Organization and Platform. This much having been done, the convention took the usual recess, leaving the committees to go into session in separate rooms back of the stage.

The delegates filed out, the men from Wills and Matawan angry and silent in their shamed defeat, those from the six victorious counties crowing exuberant glee at their easy triumph.

The adjournment announced, Clive slipped out of the Convention Hall by a rear entrance, and went across to his private office at the League rooms. He wanted to be alone—away from even the staunchest friends—in this black hour. Against all counsel and experience, against hope itself, he had hoped to the last. His bulldog pluck, his faith in his mission, had upheld him above other, colder, saner reason. Even the repeated warnings of Ansel had left him unconvinced. Up to the very moment Conover's final successful move was made Standish had hoped. And now hope was dead.

He was beaten. Hopelessly, utterly, starkly beaten. From the outset Conover had played with him and his plans as a giant might play with a child. It had been no question of open battle, with the weaker antagonist battered to earth by the greater, the whole campaign had been a futile struggle of an emmeshed captive to break through a web too mighty for his puny efforts, while his conqueror had sat calmly by, awaiting a victory that was sure as the rise of the sun.

Standish knew that in a few minutes he would be able to pull himself together and face the world as a man should. In the interim, with the hurt animal's instinct, he wanted to be alone.

Save for a clerk in the antechamber, the League's rooms were deserted. Everyone was at the convention. The clerk rose at Clive's entrance and would have spoken, but the defeated candidate passed unheeding into his own office, closing the door behind him.

Then, stopping short, his back to the closed door, he stared, unbelieving, at someone who rose at his entrance and hurried forward, hands outstretched, to greet him.

"I knew you would come here!" said Anice Lanier. "I felt you would, so I hurried over as soon as they adjourned. Aren't you glad to see me?"

He still stared, speechless, dumbfounded. She had caught his unresponsive hands, and was looking up into his tired hopeless eyes with a wealth of pity and sympathy that broke through the mask of blank misery on his face and softened the hard lines of mouth and jaw into a shadow of a smile.

"It was good of you to come," he said at last. "I thought I couldn't bear to see anyone just now. But—it's so different with you, I—"

He ceased speaking. His overstrung nerves were battling against a childish longing to bury his hot face in those cool little white hands whose lightest touch so thrilled him and to tell this gentle, infinitely tender girl all about

his sorrows, his broken hopes, his crushed self-esteem. In spirit he could feel her arms about his aching head, drawing it to her breast; could hear her whispered words of soothing and encouragement.

Then, on the moment, the babyish impulse passed and he was himself again, self-controlled, outwardly stolid, realizing as never before that the price of strength is loneliness.

"I am beaten," he went on, "but I think we made as good a fight as we could. Perhaps another time—"

She withdrew her hands from his. Into her big eyes had crept something almost akin to scorn.

"You are giving up?" she asked incredulously. "You will make no further effort to—"

"What more is to be done? The Committee on Credentials—"

"I know. I was there. It's all been a wretched mistake from the very beginning. Oh, why were you so foolish about those letters?"

"Letters? What letters?"

"The letters sent you with news of Mr. Conover's plans for—"

"Those anonymous letters I got? What do you know—"

"I wrote them," said Anice Lanier.

CHAPTER XV.

Anice Intervenes.

YOU wrote them? You wrote them?" muttered Standish, over and over, stupid, dazed, refusing to believe, or understand.

"Yes," she said, "I wrote them. And I wrote one to Mr. Ansel. He was wiser than you. He tried to profit by what I—"

"And I—I thought it might be Gerald Conover."

"Gerald? He never knew any of the more secret details of the campaign. His father couldn't trust him."

"And he did trust you."

"I've seen forty pictures of Juads Iscariot in my time," he thundered, apostrophizing the portrait in a nasal voice that rose high above the clamor, "and no two of them looked alike. But by the Eternal, they all were the living image of YOU!"



"And he did trust you."

Clive had not meant to say it. He was sorry before the words had passed his lips. Yet it was the first lucid thought that came to him as his mind cleared from the first shock of Anice's revelation. He knew how fully Conover believed in this pretty secretary of his; how wholly the Railroader had, in her case, departed from his life rule of universal suspicion. That she should thus, cold-bloodedly, calculatingly, have betrayed the trust of even such an employer as Caleb was monstrous. He could not reconcile it with anything in his own long knowledge of her. The revelation turned him sick.

"You despise me, don't you?" she asked. There was no shame, no faltering in her clear young voice.

"I have no right to—judge anyone," he stammered. "I—"

"You despise me." And now it was a statement, not a query.

"No," he said, slowly, trying to gauge his own tangled emotions, "I don't. I don't know why I don't, but I don't. I should think anyone else that did such a thing was lower than the beasts. But you—why, you are—"

(Continued On last page.)

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News Item Office.

Short Talks On Advertising

By Charles Austin Bates.

No. 13.

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So in advertising. That is an economical expense. I call it an expense to avoid argument. In reality it is an investment.

In a ten-dollar advertisement the last two dollars pay better than the other eight. Maybe an eight-dollar ad. wouldn't pay when a ten-dollar ad. would. Maybe that extra space is just what the ad. needs to lift it out of oblivion—to make it prominent—to make it pay.

Don't buy more space than you need, but don't buy too little, either. Better buy too much than too little. Better put an eight-dollar ad. in a ten-dollar space than to put a ten-dollar ad. in an eight-dollar space. One way you are out only two dollars; the other way you are out eight dollars.

Save money on your advertising if you can, of course, but save it in the right way. Cut off the little leaks—the programs, the bills of fare, the directories, the wall charts, the pages in "souvenirs." Cut them all off, and your trade will never feel the difference.

Cut off the inconsequential papers if you have to, but always keep your ad. in your best papers, big enough to do you justice. It is better to convince a few people than to talk to many.

You will always find that the best papers give you more for your money than any other media.

Don't think one paper high-priced because the rate is a dollar an inch, and another one low-priced because it is ten cents an inch. Usually the more you pay for advertising the cheaper it is.

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