

A Cowtown Episode.

By Thomas B. Montfort.

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SEE them two old plugs over there? the landlord of the Maverick hotel asked, pointing across the street. The grocery drummer, who had been caught over Sunday in the little Kansas cowtown, looked up and saw two grizzled, gray old men sitting peacefully side by side on a dry goods box in the shade of a building.

"As mild and quiet as a pair of little, innocent lambs," the landlord added with a chuckle, "and dwellin' together jest like they was own twin brothers!" The grocery drummer yawned and took up a paper and began to read. The old men did not interest him in the least. It was no uncommon thing in his experience to see a couple of old fellows loafing on a village street.

"But that's jest the way they always are," the landlord went on. "You hardly ever see 'em when they ain't together. Wherever one goes the other goes, and whatever one does the other does. Ever since a feller come along here and put us on to it we been callin' 'em Damou and Pythias. You've heard tell of them chaps, I reckon?" The drummer nodded.

"Well, these two old cubs is jest like that so far as their friendship goes—stand by each other through thick and thin, and either of 'em would fight to the last breath for the other. And quiet and peaceable! You would naturally think they'd been raised up in a Sunday school and hadn't never heard tell of nothin' but the Bible all their lives."

The drummer made no reply, and a long silence followed. At last, however, the landlord emitted a soft chuckle and, pointing across the street, said:

"You wouldn't ever guess, now, a-lookin' at them settin' there that way, that they used to be two of the toughest cusses that ever run the range and that for two years they tried their very best to kill each other. Now, would you?" "Hardly," the drummer answered. "Yit it's even so. I bet each of 'em has got a pound of lead in him now that the other put there, and as for scars—well, I reckon they've branded each other up about as complete as they could without puttin' the scars on double."

The drummer began to show interest. He laid aside his paper and asked for the particulars.

"Well, it's like this," the landlord began: "Joe Kern—that's the one on the right there—he used to be a cowboy and worked on the Triple X ranch, 'bout twenty miles south of town. And he was shore a holy terror. There was lots of mighty tough cowboys round here in them days, but the toughest of 'em was as mild and harmless as babies compared with Joe. Their little scrapper and shootin' wa'n't much more than Sunday school work when looked at alongside of what he done."

"Among the eccentric notions Joe got into his head was one to the effect



THE BALL CUT A LOCK OF HAIR FROM AB'S HEAD.

that this town didn't need no marshal and shouldn't have none. Accordin'ly, as soon as that idea hit him he sent in word to the marshal invitin' him to resign or move away and sayin' that he would be up in a few days and would be under the painful necessity of vacatin' the office with his six shooter if the marshal disregarded his well meant invitation.

"The marshal was a young feller, and he hadn't never felt any special longing to quit this world for another that he didn't know anything about, so he suddenly decided that he'd give up his job and go away to some place that was more conducive to longevity.

Accordin'ly, he tendered his resignation and without waitin' for it to be accepted lit out. "After that there were other marshals, but none of them held the office very long. As fast as they were elected Joe invited them to resign, and they showed respect for his wishes. Some of them were a little slow, though, and he had to come in and press his invitation by firin' a few shots just close enough about their heads to make them nervous and loosen up the muscles of their legs.

"Well, things went along that way for 'bout a year. Then one day a long ganglin' feller with a mild eye, a soft voice and a solemn lookin' face happened into town. His name was Ab Case, and that's him a-sittin' over there on the left.

"Ab he was lookin' for a job, and the town it was lookin' for a marshal jest then, so the two gits together and strikes up a deal. Ab says he ain't never been a marshal, but 'lows he can manage it all right, and the town is findin' it difficult to get anybody to take the job with Joe Kern and shore death hangin' over it, so to speak.

"Well, Ab is sworn in and puts on the star, and then here comes a invite to him from Joe, askin' him to resign. Ab listened to Joe's message, which was delivered by another cowboy, then shrugs his shoulders and replies that he don't never accept invitations second-hand.

"If Mr. Kern wants me to consider any proposition he has got to offer along that line," he says, "he will have to come in and see me personally."

"About three days later Mr. Kern did come in. Down at the saloon he told them why he had come. It was to convince the new marshal that he ought to resign and go away.

"And I have brought my very best arguments with me," he finished, "arguments that ain't never failed as a last resort."

"He shore had them, too—a Winchester and a brace of six shooters. And he knowed how to handle them arguments 'bout as eloquently as any man that ever lived.

"He irrigated his system at the bar, coolly lighted a cigar and then went out to look up the marshal and pay his respects to him. And he didn't have to go far, either, for he was scarcely out of the saloon when somebody pointed out Ab standin' on a corner 'bout half a block away.

"'Ace you shore that's him? Joe asked. 'I'd rather not make any mistake and kill an innocent man if it can be helped."

"That's shore him," they answered. "Joe smiled and raised his gun.

"'I'll sorter wake him up," he said. "I won't hurt him at first, but jest call his attention that I'm here."

"He fired, and the ball cut a lock of hair from Ab's head. Ab looked around sort of casual to see what it meant and the next instant sent back an answer to Joe's shot. That answer plowed a furrow along the side of Joe's head.

"From that they went at it in dead earnest. Everybody else got out of the way and give 'em a clear field. There wa'n't no backin' down and no runnin' on the part of neither of 'em. They jest stood up there and pumped lead at and into each other as carelessly and cheerfully as you please.

"After 'bout ten minutes the firin' ceased, and then we all cautiously peered out to see how it had ended. They was both down on the ground helpless, but still tryin' to shoot.

"When we come to examine, we found 'em pretty badly riddled up, but with no wounds that promised to be fatal. We carried 'em off, and the doctors patched 'em up, and for a long time they remained quiet in bed.

"Some of us reckoned the matter would end there, as they had both shorely had enough, but the older men thought different. One of 'em said:

"'It won't ever end while they both live. Kern will never give up, and it's pretty evident Case won't either. When they get out, they'll be at it again, and they'll keep at it till one of 'em is done for."

"And it proved that he was partly right. The very first time they met after their recovery they took another round of shootin' at each other.

"The result this time was similar to what it had been before. Both were badly pased up, but neither injured fatally.

"And so for two years it continued. Every time Joe came up to town there was a shootin' bout. They fought to kill, too, and, both of 'em bein' good shots, we reckoned every time one of 'em would be shore to git it. But, strange to say, neither of 'em ever did. They riddled each other all up, but they was never able to git in a finishin' shot.

"'I'll git him yit, though,' Joe declared. 'I'm jest bound to do it before I quit.'

"Ab made the same declaration, and we was all shore one of 'em would be killed before the thing come to an end. Didn't seem like it could wind up any other way.

"But it transpired that we was all entirely mistaken, as you can see for yourself.

"One day, 'bout three months after the last shootin' scrapec and jest when we was expectin' Joe to make another appearance, a covered wagon drove into town and stopped in front of the mayor's office. The wagon was from the Triple X, and we couldn't understand its bein' covered that way, so we all gathered round to see what it meant.

"In the bottom of the wagon was some straw, and lyin' stretched out on the straw was Joe Kern. We see at a glance that Joe was mighty sick, for

he jest lay there and moaned and didn't take no notice of nobody nor nothin'.

"While we was standin' there gapin' like a passel of idiots Ab come up and pushed his way through the crowd to the wagon. We 'lowed shore as soon as Ab got his eyes on Joe he'd plug him, but right there we was mistaken some more.

"Ab looks at Joe a minute, then turns to the driver and says:

"'What's the matter of the cuss?'" "Smallpox," the driver replies.

"In about half a minute that identical part of town became rather scarce of population. All of us except Ab, Joe and the driver happened to simultaneously remember that we had more pressin' business other places, and we hurried off to tend to it.

"It seemed, as we learned afterward, that Joe had been exposed to the smallpox somewhere and that the first thing they knowed he took down with it. The ranch wa'n't no fit place for a sick man to stay, so they loaded him up and sent him into town, expectin' the mayor to take him in hand and do somethin' with



"IF THERE'S ANY MORE SHOOTIN' DONE, YOU'LL HAVE TO DO IT!"

him. But it happened that the mayor was away from home and wouldn't be back for a week.

"Ab studied a little while. Then he said to the driver:

"'Take him down to the best I can for him. That seems to be all there is for it.'

"So the driver went on down to Ab's house, and he and Ab took Joe from the wagon and carried him in and put him in Ab's bed. Ab turned nuss and stayed right there with Joe, sleepin' on a blanket on the floor.

"Of course we was all surprised at Ab doin' that way, seein' that he and Joe were such bitter enemies, and we talked about it and wondered at it. Joe couldn't understand it, either, so one day when he was gittin' better he says to Ab:

"'There's one thing I want to know, Mr. Case. I've puzzled about it a good bit lyin' here, and I can't seem to git the hang of it. I would like to know why you took me in and nussed me this way?'"

"'I hope,' Ab replied, 'that you ain't got no notion that I done it for love?'"

"'Hardly,' Joe answered. 'But that is what makes it harder to understand.'"

"'Then I'll explain,' Ab said. 'First, I wouldn't be brute enough to let a sick dog suffer for attention if I could help it, and, second, I didn't want you to die a natural death and cheat me out of the pleasure of shootin' you.'

"'Joe's face broke into a smile, and he reached out and took Ab's hand and pressed it warmly.

"'Your words are a great relief to me,' he said. 'I was afraid you was goin' to place me under obligations not to kill you, and it worried me. But now I understand, and it's all right. As soon as I get out of this we'll take up the fight, and we'll keep it till I git you.'

"'Till I git you, you mean,' Ab corrected.

"'Do I? Well, you'll see.'"

"'It went on till at last Joe was able to be up and around; then I'm blamed if Ab didn't turn in and take down with the smallpox. Then them two jest reversed things. Ab took the bed, and Joe nussed him and slept on the floor. Ab was mighty bad off for a while, but finally he begun to git better.

"'One day when Joe was sittin' by the bed Ab broke a long silence by sayin':

"'I'll be out soon now, and then I reckon we'll be done with this cussed smallpox.'

"'Yep, I reckon so,' Joe replied. "'And it won't be long either,' Ab went on, 'till we can resume our little pastime of shootin' each other up.'

"'Joe turns around and looks Ab straight in the eyes and says:

"'You may think me a coward if you want to, but I say right now that if there's any more shootin' done you'll have to do it. I'm through for my part. Before I'll shoot a man who took me in and cared for me like you did I'll pull up stakes and leave the country.'

"'Ab looked surprised for a moment; then he stretched out his hand and said:

"'Put 'er thar, pard. Them's my sentiments ezactly.'

"'And from that day them two fellows has been jest like you see 'em

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RESOURCES.

Loans and discounts.....	\$403,597.61
Overdrafts, secured and unsecured	1,898.91
U. S. Bonds to secure circulation	47,000.00
Premium on U. S. Bonds	1,400.00
Bonds, securities, etc.....	56,930.00
Due from National Banks (not reserve agents).....	51,204.04
Due from State Banks and Bankers	46,085.15
Due from approved reserve agents	200,595.03
Checks and other cash items	487.62
Notes of other National Banks	13,955.00
Nickels and cents.....	322.51
Lawful money reserve in Bank, viz:	
Specia	\$194,000
Legal-tender notes	120
Redemption fund with U. S. Treasurer (5 per cent circulation)	2,350.00
Total	\$1,019,945.87

LIABILITIES.

Capital stock paid in.....	\$100,000.00
Surplus fund	25,000.00
Undivided profits, less expenses and taxes paid....	24,408.91
National Bank notes outstanding	47,000.00
Individual deposits subject to check..\$646,648.86	
Demand certificates of deposit	\$176,513.10
Certified checks	375.00
Total	\$1,019,945.87

State of Oregon, County of Clatsop, ss:

I, S. S. Gordon, Cashier of the above-named bank, do solemnly swear that the above statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

S. S. GORDON, Cashier.
Subscribed and sworn to before me this 21st day of February, 1908.
E. P. NOONAN, Notary-Public.

Correct—Attest:
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