CAMEO KIRBY

BY BOOTH TARKINGTON AND HARRY LEON WILSON
NOVELIZED FROM THE PLAY BY W. B. M. FERGUSON

[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER IX.

EVEN a more obtuse and inexperienced man than Eugene Kirby would not have failed to interpret Adele's words and bearing, the cause of which was as yet beyond her understanding. Kirby knew that he was dealing with no coquette, who sought to pander to vanity or who considered all men the plaything of an idle hour. It was not so much Adele's words as her manner, which betrayed a frank liking and interest, which, despite his modest arguments to the contrary, could no longer be attributed to an impersonal regard for his comfort and welfare. He saw [illegible] herself, she was rapidly passing through the various stages of liking and interest, heading straight for that inevitable climax which is furnished by the term love. In view of the fact that she had already arrived there and had made every effort to assist her towards the same goal, the previous misgivings and self censure which now assailed him were decidedly out of place.

True to his character, he had acted first and considered last. He had put forth every effort to please, to awaken her health. And now that there were signs that it was answering he was dismayed. In the flush of his new and [illegible] he had forgotten [illegible] reputation—forgotten [illegible] a common gambler, with [illegible] he was [illegible] everything [illegible] fortune, [illegible] of the [illegible] he centred his [illegible] concerned them [illegible]

Kirby [illegible] this self reproach, [illegible] was mainly justified, for he had made no conscious effort to enlist Adele's regard, and their mutual attraction had been as instantaneous and spontaneous as it was natural and to be expected. But the knowledge of her identity had awakened him to a lively sense of his true position, and, although he was far from being the scoundrel which Moreau had pictured and Adele believed him, his regard for her clearly showed him that by remaining he was jeopardizing her future peace and happiness. He must save her from herself and from him and, no matter how difficult it would prove, kill her dawning interest, which naturally was based on the supposition that he was a gentleman privileged to associate with one of her standing. Filled with this resolution, he now [illegible] and said:

"Miss [illegible] have been kinder to me than any man ever was. You saved my [illegible] morning. But my friend is right. I'd better go. Already you've helped me more than you ought."

Instantly the mobile, wrapt expression was [illegible] from her face, and, astonished [illegible] angry, she turned upon him.

"Why? What right have you to say that?" she demanded. "Do you think I don't want to?"

"No," he admitted. "But but I can't stay."

"Do you want me to believe that you're afraid?"

"Yes, I'm afraid."

"Afraid [illegible] we expect the real Colonel [illegible] tonight or tomorrow? [illegible] and you [illegible] you are. [illegible] afraid [illegible] very [illegible] yes, an incredulous, challenging smile on her lips.

"No, I was never afraid of a man," he admitted quietly. "But I am afraid of"—

"Of me?" she whispered interpreting the pause.

"Yes," he said simply.

Her eyes battled to meet his own, but every effort proved futile, and at length, coloring vividly, she sought the garden seat, half turning her back, while he pre-empted the arm, toying restlessly with the white camelia he still carried.

"I gather from the stories you read the General," he continued, bending toward her, while he smiled half cynically, "that the bad prince always keeps following the beautiful princess, and of course she always finds him out. Now, it looks to me like a weakness in his character that he doesn't quit before she has the chance to. In my opinion, he's a fool to take the risk."

Her answer came tremulously, but withal brave and to the point.

"I suppose I could find a story in which she would want him to take the chance. Now—now, are you going to stay?" turning and looking up, half daringly, into his eyes.

"I can't," he said doggedly. "And the sooner I go the better. Don't let anything ever make you sorry that you helped me. Goodby." And, throwing the camelia on the bench, he resolutely offered his hand.

But she ignored the hand and picked up the discarded flower.

"Not yet, not yet," she whispered. "There is Aunt calling me, and I must dress for dinner. But I shall expect to see you again before you leave. You will wait here? You may tell me goodby then, if you wish to."

He bowed, seating himself dejectedly on the garden seat, while she flew into the house.

The sun had set, and twilight was fast approaching, the shadows of the trees blending in one solid gray impalpable mass. It seemed as if the disappearance of the sun and Adele had been coincident, productive of the same effect. Without warning the day's work seemed to be clamoring for toll, demanding more than Kirby owned. He felt weary, spent, utterly forsaken and alone, the bleak and barren future stretching interminably before him. Hostage of his bitter humor, he was oblivious to the fact that the old negro, Croup, watching his opportunity, had stolen from the house and was now regarding him fixedly, and he started when at length the other timidly ventured to address him.

"[illegible] me, sah. Could [illegible] kind fo' me to ask a question?" prefaced Croup, with a humble bow. "I got a very strong recommend o' de way yo' is treated in de hospitble, but it must 'a been a pow'ful time since yo' was here. [illegible] yo' do das right, specially in de middle, sah."

"[illegible] here before," replied Kirby [illegible]

"[illegible] Croup got a rack his wind once, since I knows yo' face as well as I [illegible] own. I bet I ain't [illegible] a wink tonight trying [illegible] which it was I know yo', sah."

Amused by the other's evident perplexity, Kirby in his characteristic fashion [illegible] dismissed his own [illegible] "Come, [illegible] out!

[illegible] while [illegible] and entertaining [illegible] what to say, sah?" he cried. "Bless God, 'Lil' Marse Gene, Cheer Up! It's done come to me. It's Marse Gene Kirby"—

"S-sh! Don't call me that," warned the other, jumping to his feet.

"Na, sah. I don't say dat name no mo'," replied Croup, with an effort restraining his excitement and pleasure. "T'was your own pa done rix me, sah, an' yo' can trust me clean throo to de bone. I'm Croup, what done knowed yo' was lil' marse. But what yo' doin' here? 'Tain't safe. Dey cas marshally goin' to kill yo', Marse Gene. Honey, yo' must git off'n dis land as quick as yo' kin."

"Thank you for the warning, Croup," said Kirby, offering his hand. "But don't you worry about me. I'm going. Can you get two horses for me? Good! Have them saddled and bring them around on the road."

As the old serving man ambled away Larkin Bunce appeared. The plethoric gambler was thoroughly miserable with his surroundings and had decided to make a last appeal to his partner.

"Praise the Lord," he began earnestly, "that the nigger's given you sense enough to see that you've got to

"S-SH! DON'T CALL ME THAT."

go. You know where you are now, don't you? I heard you askin' for horses. Well, you kite for the river. I'm too fat to keep up, but I'll ketch you later on. Come. We can't get off too soon."

"I can't leave until I've seen Miss Randall," replied Kirby, with quiet finality. "I have told her that I would wait for her here."

"Why, you gosh a'mighty idiot!" exploded Bunce. "Don't you know Tom Randall's liable to be here any minute and a posse with him? If I could track you out here from Noo Orleans, he kin, kain't he? Ain't you ever goin' to quit doin' these reckless, fool things? Surely you ain't reached your time of life without knowin' what a woman means when she says 'Wait a minute,' and she didn't even say that. You kain't wait for her, I tell you."

"I'd wait for her till the Lord quit making minutes," replied Kirby. "When she comes I'll go."

Once more Bunce helplessly appealed to an invisible audience for pity, for compassion, at his thus being associated with an utter lunatic.

"You pore lost soul!" he finally groaned. "Do you think I don't know what's the matter with you? I seen you look at her. What business have you got hangin' around a lady, even if you wouldn't git shot for just comin' here? What chance have you got with a lady anyway? Ain't there women enough in the world? You know no lady would have anything to do with our kind. You got no business"—

"I don't hurt her if I only look at her, do I?" snapped Kirby, whirling upon his partner in sudden passion. "My God, if a man's been outside the walls for years you can't blame him for wanting to look at the flowers a minute if he gets into the garden some day. That can't harm them."

"Gene, do you know you're crazy yourself?" sadly pronounced Bunce, with a shake of the head. "They say them loonies do know it sometimes. And a nice, crazy turn you done me, too, tying me up here with folks like these," he added, with vehement reproach as full realization of his many wrongs overcame him. "You know I never had nothin' to say to no ladies, and as soon as I ever see one I choke up, and my neck gets hot and my ears git red. Interduced me as his secretary," again appealing to the invisible audience. "Waugh! Secretary! I'd make a h— of a secretary, wouldn't I? Come on, Gene. Pry yourself loose from all this darn foolishness before it's too late"—

"I've already given you my decision," interrupted Kirby, with some asperity. "But, Larkin, don't let my affairs detain you."

Bunce, after a farewell invocation of the heavens, resigned himself to the inevitable and, seating himself on the garden seat, proceeded to pick his teeth, while he fastened a plaintive and expectant eye on the distant house.

The partners sat in moody silence for some time until at length their reveries were interrupted by the advent of Judge Pleydell, Mr. Randall and M. Veaudry. The judge had but returned from the steamboat landing, and as he approached the occupants of the garden seat his expression was of so serious a character that Bunce, ever on the lookout for trouble, now scented danger and, nudging his companion, jumped to his feet. But Kirby, though wary eyed, remained outwardly cool and entirely self possessed and, embracing this heaven sent opportunity of further aggravating his partner, promptly introduced the latter as "my secretary."

"Colonel Moreau, sir," began the judge, somewhat astonished at the ferocity of Mr. Bunce's bow, "I have the most astonishing piece of news for you. What would you say if I told you that you had no right to be here at all, sir?"

As Pleydell, preserving his stern demeanor, laid a hand on Kirby's shoulder his companions exchanged startled and significant glances, while Mr. Bunce grew apologetic and edged nearer his partner. All eyes were now on Kirby, but his expression of mild surprise and courteous interest never changed.

"Well, I reckon I'd have to say that the joke was on me, judge," he calmly replied.

Pleydell began to laugh.

"Well, sir, according to rumor, you ain't here. According to rumor, you ain't anywhere, because you're dead." To him it was a huge joke, and he roared until the tears mingled with his snowy mustache, all ignorant of the fact that he had propounded a literal truth; ignorant of the fact that his companions were still significantly eying each other and that Mr. Bunce was having exceeding difficulty with his collar. In fact, Kirby was the sole member of the interested audience who appeared to appreciate the full humor of the situation.

"When is my funeral?" he asked, with a smile. "I don't want to miss that."

His composure somewhat recovered; but, still chuckling and occasionally going off into another spasm of laughter, the judge proceeded to explain the manner in which he had gained the interesting information.

"The afternoon steamer does not stop, sir, and I am obliged to row out in a boat to get my letters. The news was shouted to us from the deck as she moved away. All I could catch was the words, 'Colonel Moreau dead,' and I think they added, 'This morning.' The distance was too great for me to secure any further items from that interesting liar, sir."

And, still laughing, Pleydell clapped Kirby on the shoulder, while Mr. Bunce, drawing his first long breath, mutely thanked the Almighty that all guilelessness and innocence had not entirely deserted mankind when the serpent entered Eden.

But it was apparent that Mr. Randall and M. Veaudry owned more discernment and that their quick suspicions, previously aroused, had now become active, pregnant with danger. It so happened that they were now augmented by none other than the General, who would have died rather than wittingly betray his trust. During the judge's discourse the boy had joined the group, seeking out Kirby as his natural companion. Looking at the other's hand and again at his breast, the General suddenly exclaimed: "I know what all those things are that you wear. They're cameos."

"Cameos," exclaimed Aaron under his breath, his eyes returning to those of M. Veaudry.

Meanwhile Adele had been busily preparing for her last mute appeal to Kirby to remain. For the first time since her father's death she discarded mourning and in its place arrayed herself in a treasured evening gown of white satin purchased in Paris before the long shadow had descended upon

"I HAVE THE MOST ASTOUNDING PIECE OF NEWS FOR YOU."

the family fortunes. She was determined to look her best that night and in this feminine maneuver was enthusiastically supported by her aunt and Ann Pleydell, who, if they did not suspect the cause, were entirely happy with the result, for they had long been urging the girl to discard the morbid preoccupation and settled misery which had threatened to sap vitality, embitter life; anxiously sought and hoped for some means of transforming her into the girl she once had been.

It now appeared as if their most optimistic desires had materialized, for it had been many a long day since Adele had evinced such anxious care and pride in her toilet, assumed the necessary duty with such lightsome heart and eager, feverish fingers. With pardonable vanity she closely scanned her reflection in the mirror, seeking a blemish and finding it not. Indeed, her toilet finished, the result more than justified her elaborate and careful preparation. As a finishing touch she pinned in her coiffure the white camelia which Kirby had discarded, and, conscious that she had done her very best in this important detail of her maneuver, she repaired to the veranda, accompanied by Mme. Davezac and Miss Pleydell, suitably attired for the evening.

The moon had now risen, flooding the garden with its brilliant light and disclosing Mr. Randall and M. Veaudry standing a little apart from the others, their attitude eloquent of hostile suspicion. A pregnant silence had succeeded the General's exclamation, a silence broken at length by a tense whisper from Bunce.

"Come, Gene," he urged, catching the other's arm. "The boy has let it out. Look at that man's face," indicating Aaron Randall.

Kirby nodded imperceptibly while he calmly patted the General's head.

"Gentlemen," he said, bowing to the others, "I regret I am taking my leave. I only wait to say goodby to Miss Randall."

"Who is it speaks of leaving?" suddenly demanded Adele's clear voice, and, turning, they all saw the ladies watching them from the veranda. "Colonel Moreau," added the girl, coming down the steps and approaching Kirby, while Mme. Davezac and Ann Pleydell echoed her protests, "you cannot think of leaving. Dinner is served, and your place at table is next to me. Will you give me your arm?" smiling up into his eyes.

The full significance of her change of attire, the delicate but overwhelming compliment paid by the white camellia and the message it mutely conveyed, the great honor shown him, the overpowering appeal which this new, wondrous, resplendent Adele made to his already captive senses, wiped out in a breath all Kirby's hitherto adamantine resolution and fixity of purpose, obliterated all thoughts of the future or care for his present danger.

"Now git to those hosses," implored Bunce, sensing that his partner was in peril of yielding dominion to this feminine appeal. "Git to the hosses, Gene."

"Hang the horses!" cried Kirby recklessly. "I'm going to dinner with a lady."

Throwing whip and hat on the garden seat, he bowed to Adele and offered his arm, while Larkin Bunce, inwardly raging at this new and sublime act of lunacy, turned helplessly to his sympathetic but invisible audience.

(To be continued.)

Norway's Love For E[illegible]

What Bjornson was [illegible] people is best made [illegible] dent which occurred at [illegible] Aulestad not long [illegible] forced to start on his final [illegible] to Paris in search of another [illegible] health and life. A regiment [illegible] the place in the course of [illegible] ever. Its commander sent word [illegible] to the poet asking him to review the soldiers as they marched by. Bjornson stood on the veranda of his home surrounded by his entire family—a man who had never held any public office, mind you! As the troop approached on the highroad below officers and men gave the salute due to a commanding general or a member of the royal house. But this was not all. From the rapidly moving ranks rose one mighty shout after another—a spontaneous outburst of devotion and gratitude such as it has been granted very few men the fortune to inspire. —Edward Bjorkman in American Review of Reviews.

An Experience at Hull House.

Even death itself sometimes fails to bring the dignity and serenity which one would fain associate with old age. I recall the dying hour of one old Scotchwoman whose long struggle to "keep respectable" had so embittered her that her last words were gibes for those who were trying to minister to her. "So you came in yourself this morning, did you? You only sent things yesterday. I guess you knew when the doctor was coming. Don't try to warm my feet with anything but that old jacket that I've got there; it belonged to my boy who was drowned at sea nigh thirty years ago, but it's warmer yet with human feelings than any of your confounded charity hot water bottles." Suddenly the harsh gasping voice was stilled in death, and I awaited the doctor's coming, shaken and horrified.—Jane Addams in American Magazine.

Empty Titles.

William Jennings Bryan once joked about our American fondness for titles.

"You all know of the colonel," he said, "who got his title by inheritance, having married Colonel Brown's widow? But I once met a general who got his title neither by inheritance, nor by service, nor by anything you could mention.

"'General,' I said to him, 'how do you come by this title of yours, anyway?'

"'Why, sir,' said he, 'I passed my youth in the flour trade and for twenty-seven years was a general miller.'

"I know another titled man, Judge Greene.

"'Are you, sir,' I once asked him, 'a United States judge or a circuit court judge?'

"'I ain't neither,' he replied. 'I'm a judge of hoss racin'.'"

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Correct Spelling

"Why do you take Elmora away from school, Aunt Mahaly?" a lady asked her cook one day. Aunt Mahaly sniffed scornfully.

"'Cause de teacher ain't satisfactory tub me, Mis' Mally. What you reckon she tell dat chile yistidy? She 'low dat IV spell four when even a idjut 'ud know dat it spells ivy."

Applied History.

First Professor My dear colleague, I'm a little puzzled. When did the first Peloponnesian war begin? Second Professor B. C. 431. First Professor—Quite right, quite right. That is the number of my doctor's telephone. I was to call him up and tell him my wife is sick.—Exchange.

Your Own Misfortunes.

Bear your own misfortunes with half the resignation that you bear other people's and you will be happy. It is so easy to tell other people how to be heroic and so difficult to be courageous ourselves.

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