



# CAMEO KIRBY

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



[CONTINUED.]

## CHAPTER IV.

**A**LMOST one year elapsed before Colonel Moreau, harkening at length to the call of the river, returned to his old haunts in New Orleans. When he did so it was to learn that his supposed victim had entirely recovered from the effects of the "honorable combat" and, in conjunction with his partner, had reoccupied his old niche of fame-premier professional gambler of the Mississippi. Quite aside from all financial reasons—the fact that a more skillful and successful rival was garnering the major spoils of the river—the news of his victim's recovery was seriously disquieting to the honorable colonel, and had he been forewarned he might have indefinitely prolonged his acquaintance with the more healthful climate of Mexico. He knew that Kirby was not the type of man to forget or condone a bullet in the back or the smirching of whatever little remained of his once fair reputation, and had he even remotely suspected that he would recover he (Moreau) would not have prefabricated so cheerfully and with such abandon to young Randall. How much did the boy now know? That was the all important question. Kirby, of course, had learned that he stood accused of the late John Randall's suicide, but had he taken the trouble to refute it? Moreau did not think so, and Moreau was right.

Kirby had but vaguely heard of the unjust accusation and, having been long since case-hardened to calumny in all its phases, paid little if any attention. Had any member of the Randall family sought him out he would, as a matter of duty, have proved his innocence. But they, believing him dead, had not done so, and he refused to take the initiative, partly because he could not give absolute credence to the rumor, but in a greater measure because of the demands upon his time. After all, it did not matter. It meant only another tally to the score of Jack Moreau, and all would be wiped out by that gentleman's death, an undertaking upon which he had definitely decided. What stood between them could be eradicated only by the bullet.

Meanwhile the passing year has brought with it many changes for the surviving members of the Randall family. Life is tenacious, and they could the shock incident upon their father's suicide. The one small measure of satisfaction in the whole terrible affair was the knowledge that the despoiler of their home had promptly met his death and that in consequence they were at least saved from pauperization, for they were entirely ignorant of Kirby's recovery or the measures he had voluntarily taken for their protection.

To the only girl, Adele, had fallen the brunt of suffering. The General, a child of eight, was too young to fully comprehend his loss, while Tom, a hot headed youth in his early twenties, occupied all his time with the plantation and devoted all spare moments to nursing his hatred against Kirby's memory. While glorying in the latter's supposed death he deplored that his hand had not effected it. Where grief had paralyzed Adele it had but further aroused the boy's militant and aggressive nature, adding, moreover, a veneer of youthful and bitter cynicism. He abhorred Kirby's memory with an intensity passing the hatred of man and, even had he been a stranger to the then prevailing and primitive notions of justice, would, had he known the other lived, have immediately sought him out and killed him. If his

father's memory demanded that no resistance should be made to the gambler's claim it likewise demanded that the latter should not live overlong to enjoy his newly acquired property.

More than once, as if uneasy intuition sought to prompt the truth, the boy had suggested to his sister the possibility of Kirby having survived Moreau's sincere attentions. Then he would break out in an ungovernable fit of fury and hatred.

"Supposing that scoundrel has lived and intends reaping the reward of his crime?" he would cry. "He gained that deed by the vilest scoundrelism ever practiced. Well, let him make good his claim if he can."

"But who will dispute it?" Adele would lifelessly inquire, pinching at her black dress, while twin patches of scarlet would begin to burn in the dead white of her face. "Do you think we could stoop to ask mercy from a man of that stamp? Whether the deed was gained honestly or not, it does not matter. Father's signature is on the paper, and we must stand by it, Tom. You know that. Anyway," she would blush deeply, "what does it matter? What does it matter where we go, what we become? Let this Mr. Kirby—if that be his name—finish the work he began so well."

"I wish you could pick up a little more spirit, Dele," he would return, sullen and resentful in the one breath. "Doesn't the thought of that scoundrel's possible recovery make your blood boil? Don't you ever



NEVER  
"SUPPOSING THAT SCOUNDREL INTENDS REAPING THE REWARD OF HIS CRIME!"

consider the thought of you and the General and me being rendered absolute paupers? Think of what it would mean to leave the only home we have known!"

"I have thought of all that until my brain is sick—sick like my heart," she would interrupt colorlessly. "I have long contemplated the possibility; thought that the deed might, after all, be enforced. I have talked the matter over with Aunt Davezac. We have decided that the moment we learn that this—this gambler is alive we will put the place in order and leave immediately for New Orleans—again quarter ourselves on aunty. After that—well, you and I must learn how to work, Tom. We must provide for the General's schooling, and of course we cannot be a burden on Aunt Davezac one moment longer than is absolutely necessary. Above all, there must on no account be any opposition to this Mr. Kirby's claim, supposing he still lives."

"Yes, I suppose you're right, Dele," he would reluctantly agree. "We could not dishonor father's memory by resisting the scoundrel's claim."

And had sorrow not blurred the girl's perception, rendered her indifferent to everything, she would instantly have suspected her brother's ingenueness, for, hot headed and impulsive, he was not one to heed advice, accept the passive course that she had outlined.

As the months passed and nothing was heard of Kirby the possibility of his being alive and ever claiming the plantation was finally abandoned by Adele. But young Randall, although carefully professing to the contrary, still entertained the suspicion that his enemy lived. In time the thought became so insistent that he determined to quietly set on foot a thorough investigation. Visiting in person the town in which Kirby had fought his victorious battle against death, he eventually succeeded in tracing the physician who had attended the wounded gambler, and by him the boy's suspicions were verified beyond the possibility of a doubt. His intuition was vindicated. Kirby lived and, so far as the doctor knew, was at that moment busily engaged with his chosen profession.

Young Randall returned home, carefully concealing from his sister all hint of his mission. The girl had but lately expressed a desire to visit their aunt in New Orleans, for the plantation was pregnant with memories and sorrows that were fast growing unbearable. Taking advantage of this opportune desire and keeping his real purpose in the background, Tom now suggested that the house be temporarily closed and the long contemplated visit paid.

Securing Adele's assent to this and satisfied that Kirby was alive and that justice had yet to be meted out, young Randall, as was the custom in such matters, promptly set about informing his male relatives and friends. Among the latter was Judge Pleydell, a neighbor, whose plantation adjoined on the west that of the Randalls and to whose daughter, Ann, the boy was engaged. Tom's sole surviving relative was an elderly cousin, Aaron Randall, who, ignorant of the details connected with his uncle's death, had for over a year been detained by business interests in the north. To him Tom now urgently wrote, requesting that he come to the home of their mutual aunt in New Orleans, and the following morning the Pleydell and Randall families set out for the same destination. In the Crescent City there resided another gentleman, M. Anatole Veaudry, who, having for years sought an alliance with the Randall family through the medium of Adele, would naturally be expected to concur heartily in the plans for the annihilation of Cameo Kirby. Four to one were heavy odds, but the seaport gambler in his day had accepted greater.

In due time the Randalls and Pleydells arrived at the home of Mme. Davezac, but the weeks passed and as yet no information had been received tending to show that Kirby contemplated securing the property. In fact, Tom Randall, scouring the city for the gambler, positively learned that the latter and his partner, Bance, had left. This was indeed the case, for Kirby's sole motive in coming to New Orleans had been the desire to run down a rumor to the effect that Jack Moreau had returned to his old haunts. The rumor proved authentic, but the colonel had already left for Baton Rouge, from which town he again headed for the Crescent City, Kirby and Bance close upon his heels.

And then the inevitable happened, for one day in the streets of New Orleans Tom Randall came face to face with Moreau. On both sides the meeting was an affecting one, the astute colonel's momentary alarm turning to relief when, from the boy's effusive greeting, he ascertained the other's

agreeable state of ignorance regarding the true facts of John Randall's suicide. Tom at once confided his intention of killing Cameo Kirby, and, delighted at securing such unexpected reinforcements, Moreau heartily concurred in the intention, offering his modest co-operation in the same worthy cause. On his part the boy was only too happy to accept the further services of so valuable a friend, and he promptly invited Moreau to Mme. Davezac's, an invitation that was as promptly accepted. It being quite characteristic of the estimable gentleman to accept the hospitality of those whom he had irretrievably wronged.

Learning from Moreau that Kirby was in the city and, in fact, had been seen only that morning at the Salle de Conde, young Randall hurriedly returned to his aunt's, determined to set on foot a plan that had been suggested by Judge Pleydell. That moldy villain, Colonel Moreau, promised to join the other the moment he had secured his portmanteau.

Meanwhile Aaron Randall, an elderly, precise gentleman, whose long sojourn in the north had served to somewhat cool his fiery southern nature, had promptly answered his cousin's urgent letter by shelving all business demands and hastening south. An old bachelor, his late uncle and he had been unusually close to each other through life, and he had lavished all his affection upon the other's children, Adele in particular being his especial favorite. Business cares had prohibited his attendance at John Randall's funeral, and, in fact, he had been kept in ignorance of the facts surrounding the other's suicide. Adele holding that it would cause needless worry and sorrow.

The unpleasant duty of explaining the tragedy devolved upon Judge Pleydell, and, even while Tom was renewing his acquaintance with Colonel Moreau, Aaron had arrived at the little house in the old French quarter of the town and Pleydell was recounting to him their plan of campaign against Kirby.

"We have all our plans arranged, sir," the old judge was now saying, while he paced the room in some excitement, "and I have taken affairs more or less into my own hands. Tom would have hunted out the villain and shot him on sight, but I venture to think my way is the best, for we must recognize the honor due Mr. Randall's memory, and that means making no resistance to Mr. Kirby's claim. The first thing to do is to send your cousins out to the plantation, and they will surrender the place to its claimants—slaves, land, everything. Then, sir, we send the ladies—Mme. Davezac, along with my daughter Ann and the little boy—over to my plantation, while we remain behind to deal with the gentleman. You understand? I don't think he'll live very long to enjoy the property, and this time I don't think he'll get well."

"We'll see to that," replied Aaron quietly. "There's you and Tom and I."

"And Colonel Moreau," supplemented the judge. "I understand he is a dead shot. Then there is M. Veaudry, whom you know. He has long been a suitor of Miss Adele's, but since her father's death naturally she has been in no frame of mind for courtship, and consequently poor Anatole is as bitter on the subject of Kirby as she herself."

"Poor Cousin Adele!" murmured Aaron, wiping his eyes. "When I last saw her she was such a happy, bright eyed girl. To think of her young life being made a tragedy by this scoundrel! I'd cut off my right hand for that girl, Judge Pleydell. But this Colonel Moreau, this defender of the family—you speak of his co-operation. Is he, then, in town?"

"I have heard so," said the other quietly, "and there is no doubt that he will join us in our crusade against this scoundrel. He is not the man to forget or condone such an unspeakably vile action as he witnessed aboard the Shotwell that night. In fact, your cousins hope to have the honor of entertaining Colonel Moreau, and Tom has gone out for the express purpose of ascertaining his whereabouts, for I heard quite inadvertently that the gentleman was in town. I reckon Mr. Kirby is due to lose his life pretty shortly. He has made a lot of misery for us, sir, and it is high time he had some himself."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Hearing of the suits of the Eastern Oregon Land company, owning the old Dalles military wagon road grant through the north central portion of the state, against the Willow Creek Land & Irrigation company and the Malheur Valley railroad has been postponed in the United States court until July 1.

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The state railroad commission has issued an order designating July 5 as the date for hearing in the matter of the operating methods of the Portland Railway, Light & Power company on its Portland city lines.

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Sentence of Jefferson W. Scriber, ex-cashier of the Farmers & Traders' National Bank at La Grande, who was convicted in the United States court of wrecking that institution, has been postponed for the second time.

Cancelled.

"Is he concealed?"  
"Cancelled? I should say he is. He even imagines that he cut some figure at his own wedding."—Detroit Free Press.

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