



CAMEO KIRBY

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



[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER V.

THIS trouble has driven Tom pretty near crazy," went on the judge, "and I've put off his and my daughter Ann's wedding until we've settled Mr. Kirby, for the fact is I don't want her to take any chances of being a widow so young, sir."

"Do the ladies know what is going forward?"

"No, and I cannot impress that fact upon you too strongly, sir. They believe and are to be kept in the belief that if Colonel Moreau accepts our invitation, which no doubt he will do, we are all merely making a pleasure jaunt to the Randall plantation. We treat the whole affair in that light, sir—a visit in honor of Colonel Moreau so that the family may make his acquaintance at last and show some measure of their gratitude to him for shooting down the despoiler of their father."

The entrance of Mme. Davezac prohibited further discussion of the subject.

"Ah," she exclaimed suspiciously, "the gentlemen talk secrets already! M. Aaron," she added graciously, "you and I have not met for many years."

"A great loss to me," he gallantly replied, kissing her proffered hand. "A happy meeting, madame. The judge and I," he continued unblushingly, "were discussing plans for the probable entertainment of Colonel Moreau."

"Then you must not talk of gloomy subjects, as I saw you were doing," she replied. "No denials, please, for it is always when I see two heads together in this house it must be that they talk of their hatred for that poor Eugene Kirby."

"Poor, madame!" echoed Aaron, turning in amazement to Judge Pleydell.

"I should have warned you, sir," explained the latter, "that my dear old friend has retained her sentimentality with her youth." Considering that Mme. Davezac was past fifty-five, this was indeed a doubly remarkable performance.

"Did you know this Kirby, madame?" gravely inquired Aaron.

"No, monsieur, never; but I knew his father, and I cannot make myself to feel about the son as do all these others. I know his reputation, M. Aaron. But just think—a boy who had no one to watch him, no one to care! He drifts with bad companions; he must live somehow. Oh, I could believe he became a gambler, but that one with such blood in him could do what you all believe he has done—it is impossible."

"But, madame," protested Aaron, "this gentleman, this stranger, Colonel Moreau—"

"Ah," she quickly interrupted, "I think Colonel Moreau acted from the highest motive. None of this family has a greater wish to make his acquaintance and thank him than have I. But I am still sure there was something he did not see, something he did not understand, something which would take the stain from the action of that poor young man. Yes; you think me a fool, you laugh at me," she added as both gentlemen smiled ironically, "but it is what I think, and it is good to see some one laugh in this house even if it is at my expense."

As she turned to leave an old negro entered and announced that the "French niggebs" would serve coffee in fifteen minutes.

"Wait, Croup," commanded Mme. Davezac. Then, addressing the two

gentlemen, she added: "Listen. This negro belonged one time to the father of Eugene Kirby. Croup, tell the gentlemen what you have told me once of that time your young M. Kirby has fallen from the oak tree."

"Well, sub, it were like dis beah," began the old negro, turning to Judge Pleydell. "Twere long time ago, fo' Marse Randall done buy me to keep me from bein' sold at auction. Den I b'long to ole Marse Kirby, what's been long dead and gone. Dat ill' Marse Gene Kirby in dem days round de place all de niggebs done know him by de name of 'Lil' Marse Come Cheer Up, kase dat what de ill' boy allus say fo' greetin'. But de way what de nickname got fixed on him is dis: He sich a tendah baited ind seem lak he just kaint stan' fo' to have nobody in trouble nohah. An' one day a ill' yaller, no count, ornery brown pickaninny done clim' up in de high branches of a tree fo' to rob de aigs outen a mockin'



HEYER
"DEY CALL HIM 'LIL' MARSE COME CHEER UP.'"

bird's nes. Lil' Marse Gene Kirby he ketch sight of him up dere, an' he holler fo' him to come down. He say: 'What yo' doin' up dere, pickaninny? Don' yo' know dat ole motheb mockin' buid come back, fin' de nest robbed, she das goin' to break huh beah't a-mou'nin'? Come down from dere.'

"But de pickaninny mighty sassy an' 'sponds, 'I ain't meanin' to come down from heah—gwine to git de aigs."

"Den Marse Gene say: 'No, yo' isn't! I goin' to fetch yo' down from dah an' tan yo' hide.' An' fo' anybody could stop him he's halfway up de tree atter dat pickaninny. Pickaninny croke out on a mighty slendeh branch, but ill' marse right along atter him and grab him under the arms. Den bilmbiam went de branch and down dey come, boffem togedder. My land, I thought dem plum killed, but as dey fall Marse Gene he manage to swing his body underneath de pickaninny—what's even littler dan Marse Gene an' only a wuffless slave anyhow—so dat when dey lit de ground dat pickaninny land on top of ill' marse. But he 'gun to yell lak he's kilt. Den ill' marse all he do is to smile when we bend oveh him, an' he say to de pickaninny, 'Come cheer up.' Dat's all he say, lyin' dere wif his laig broken. Dat's all, sub."

Croup hesitated and then added: "I ain't seen ill' marse seuce he was a ill' boy, and dey say he tuh'n out very bad. But lak I tote yo' is de way he done when he was a ill' boy, an' dey call him 'Lil' Marse Come Cheer Up.' Thank yo', sub." And, with a bow, the old serving man withdrew.

"Perhaps you can understand," commented Mme. Davezac.

"My dear lady," replied the judge, "I fear the argument is wasted. It is a fact that the late Emperor Nero, a well known but disreputable character in Roman history, was very tender hearted during his boyhood."

"And," added Aaron, with much bitterness, "that a soul of such promise as a child should have fallen so low as a man makes him all the less deserving of your pity. The case against this Kirby is quite clear."

"Perhaps I am ver' foolish that I can't believe with you," she returned. "But are we not going to the plantation to forget all such things? Let us not discuss the matter further."

It was not long before young Randall arrived and acquainted the others with his happy meeting with Colonel Moreau. It was then agreed that the boy in order to prepare his home for the honored guest should precede the others to Plaquemine. Judge Pleydell having orders to leave at his plantation, proceeding from there to the Randalls' home, the pleasure of receiving Colonel Moreau was thus left in the hands of Aaron.

"He may be here at any moment," explained Tom, "and as I must change into riding togs you will have to receive him, cousin. One of our blood must be here to welcome him. I don't think we can show too much honor to the man who tried to avenge my father. So far I am the only member of the family who has made his acquaintance. I will come down as soon as I can, but you will not find him difficult to entertain. He's a fine fellow in every sense of the word."

Shortly after Judge Pleydell had departed, while the ladies were busily engaged with their packing and young Randall was dressing, the tall figure of the flower of southern chivalry, portmanteau in hand, arrived at Mme. Davezac's and was heartily greeted by the expectant Aaron, who, sensible of his duties as host, put forth every effort to receive this distinguished visitor in the manner befitting one who owned such presumable rank and virtue.

"Allow me to welcome you, sir," he said. "My name is Aaron Randall, and I have the honor to be cousin to the poor children you have befriended. May I offer you a morning dram, sir?"

Moreau accepted the glass with his native courtesy and, raising it, murmured: "With yoh, sub! I regret," he added in his best manner, "that I have never been able to meet the ladies of yoh cousin's household, and I was delighted to hear today from Mr. Randall that I am to have the pleasure of helping to complete the punishment I began mo' than a year ago on the destroyer of this family's happiness. I allude, sub, to the notorious Cameo Kirby."

"You call a pistol ball through the right lung only a beginning, colonel?" mildly inquired Aaron, impressed by his visitor's evident prowess.

"The ball I put through Kirby's right lung, sub, was the result of my indignation for others," replied Moreau. "The one I shall hope to put through his heart is for myself. Yoh family's plan for disposing of the scoundrel has my entire approval, sub. I have the honor to tell yoh that Cameo Kirby's continued existence has achieved this importance. It has become an annoyance to me—Colonel Jacques Gaspard Deschamps Moreau—and I shall wipe him from the earth."

"Let us hope so," agreed Aaron.

"Miche Larkin Bunce fo' to see de genama' what's jest come," announced old Croup, popping his head around the door and making a polite bow. Before the gentleman could arise Kirby's partner shouldered his way past the negro and strode into the room.

"Well, Moreau, I've run you down at last!" he exclaimed cynically, eyeing the startled gambler. "I've hunted the town for you, from the Salle de Conde to Congo square. I reckon you know who I come from."

Moreau, momentarily staggered, quickly recovered his wonted composure. His immediate task was to get rid of Aaron before the latter was in possession of any plain truths—truths with which the overheated Bunce seemed to be bursting.

"Mr. Randall," he said politely and with no evidence of haste, "my business with this gentleman is private. Might I beg of you—"

"He kin stay for all I care," interrupted Kirby's partner.

"Not at all, not at all," apologized Aaron. "The house is yours, sir," he added, turning to his honored guest. With another bow, which this time included Mr. Bunce, he hastily left the room.

"Seemed kinder anxious to git him out of the way," commented the intruder after a moment's silence. "I reckon you didn't hardly calculate on Gene Kirby's turnin' up here in Noo Orleans just about now. I reckon if you had you might have stayed hid in Mexico."

"You think I'd hide from Gene Kirby?" demanded Moreau, folding his arms and glaring at the other.

"I don't think you will no more," replied Bunce laconically. "You know, Jack, what I admire about you is the impudence a good skeer puts into you. You're so skeered of Kirby's getting you you've got the impudence to be here with the Randall family because you think it's the last place he'd look for you."

"Well?" demanded Moreau.

"Yes; he's pretty well again, and he's waiting for you, colonel. He don't know these folks, and he don't care what they think of him. It's yoh he's after, and I guess you wouldn't exactly like him to have a talk with Tom Randall. That's where I've got you. You've got to meet Kirby yourself 'stead o' waiting for this young Randall to try it for you. You've got sense enough to know that. If Tom went you might have both of them after you."

"I suppose," said the other suavely, "you mean I may hope for a settlement of my affairs with Kirby?"

"Oh, you bet you can hope," chuckled Bunce. "When I left Gene two hours ago I said I'd find you for him. He went to the 'dueling oaks'—you know them—and will there for you. He'll be at the far end—alone. You go into the grove at this end—alone. After you've seen each other shoot when you please. Do you understand?"

"Tell him I'll be there," said Moreau grimly.

On Bunce's departure Colonel Moreau, with his usual amiable manner and native regard for the truth, acquainted Aaron and Tom Randall with the sudden alteration in his plans, adding that for the present he must defer his meeting with the ladies.

"Foh this," he concluded, producing his Derringer, "means an appointment I cannot decline. We dispense with

right, and I claim it. Thank God, in half an hour I can look my family in the face without shame, and Adele will at last take off her mourning."

"I repeat, sub," returned Moreau, with quiet finality, "that this is my affair. I regard it as an execution. I cannot and will not permit any interference on yoh part. Merely tell the ladies that I was delayed and will follow on horseback later. And kindly take charge of my portmanteau."

Suddenly realizing the other's fixity of purpose, the boy turned to his saddlebags, from which he produced a silver mounted pistol. White faced and trembling with passion, he handed it to the colonel. "At least," he said, with an effort at dignity and self composure, "do me the favor of using this instead of your own. Since my father's death I have always carried it. It belonged to him and is the one that scoundrel caused him to turn upon himself."

"I respect the sentiment and yoh wishes, sub," replied Moreau, handing his own weapon to Aaron, who gingerly placed it in the colonel's portmanteau.

"Won't you even take me as a witness?" pleaded Tom. "He won't see me, fo' I'll hide in the underbrush."

"Impossible," Mr. Randall. I ask yoh word to continue yoh journey exactly as yoh have planned. Never fear; I shall see yoh at the plantation this evening. When yoh come in sight of yoh fields today look upon them in peace, foh by that time there will be no one to dispute them with yoh. Yoh servant, gentlemen." And, bowing, the good colonel blithely stepped forth into the morning sunshine and headed for the distant dueling oaks.

From the window Tom Randall impatiently watched the other's departure, and with a lenient estimate of the defender of the family, serene upon his coming interview with Kirby, had turned a nearby corner the boy sprang off the window seat and seized his hat.

"Where are you going?" sharply demanded Aaron, attempting to bar the other's way.

"Don't meddle with me," violently warned Tom. "If ever a man had tye

right to another's life I have the right to Cameo Kirby's. Colonel Moreau may have taken it from me, but do you think I'm not going to see it done?"

"Not in honor," said Aaron sternly. "Each was to go alone."

"What honor did Kirby show my father?" cried the boy. "Get everything ready at the plantation and tell Adele that Colonel Moreau and I will follow on horseback. If Moreau doesn't finish Kirby I will. I'll get him somehow!" And, flinging aside Aaron's detaining arm, he dashed from the house.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

To Take No Chances.
Hammar—Why in the dickens have you got that string tied around your tooth?
Absente—To remind me that I must have the tooth removed.
Hammar—But, goodness gracious, why don't you do as ordinary people and have the string tied around your finger?
Absente (stiffly)—Because, sir, I don't care to have my finger removed.—Chicago News.

Mistake of a Comma.
This instance of what a mistake of a comma can produce has been noticed: "Lord Palmerston then entered upon his head, a white hat upon his feet, large but well polished boots upon his brow, a dark cloud in his hand, his faithful walking stick in his eye, a dark menacing glare saying nothing."—Circle Magazine.

Quite So.
"There seems to be a strange affinity between a ducky and a chicken."
"Naturally. One is descended from Ham and the other from eggs."—Housekeeper.

Easy.
"She's made a fool of that young fellow."
"Well, she didn't have to economize on the raw material."—Baltimore American.

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Figures of Speech.
A well known ventriloquist who had consented to give a performance in aid of charity heard that certain members of his prospective audience were determined to watch the movements of his mouth with the closest scrutiny with a view of confounding him. The night came, the attendants carried in three dummies on chairs, and the artist made his appearance. His performance was unusually successful, the muscles of his face giving no evidence of his art. The changes of voice were marvelous, and the astonished crowd at the close of the exhibition gave him a rousing cheer. Again and again they called him back, and he expressed his pleasure by innumerable bows. At last the cheering ceased, and he was permitted to retire. Scarcely had he done so when the three "lay" figures got up from their chairs and walked off the stage. The ventriloquist had employed three friends to impersonate his usual mechanical figures.

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ATTORNEY-AT-LAW
Office in Litch Building. Enterprise, Oregon.

DR. C. A. AULT
PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON
Office in Bank Building. Home phone both office and residence.

CHARLES THOMAS
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HEYER
"DO ME THE FAVOR OF USING THIS."

seconds, foh, already having had one encounter, we are permitted to meet alone. Gentlemen, I see yoh have guessed the truth. The fact is I am going to relieve yoh of the annoyance a certain plan might have occasioned yoh. I have just received word that Cameo Kirby is awaiting me now at the dueling oaks. We show our weapons on sight, and this time I shall kill him."

"No, by God, you don't! I claim that right!" cried Tom. "Our plan is bad! I never liked it anyway. They kept me from going out after him yesterday. Now he's where I can get him!"

"This quarrel is between Kirby and myself, sub," sharply interrupted Moreau. "The message was to me."

"I take it off your hands," exclaimed Tom, laughing willy. "It's mine by