

# CAPTAIN "BILL" McDONALD of TEXAS

BY ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE

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IN THOSE days when the Mississippi planter was only something less than a feudal baron, with slaves and wide domain and vested rights; with horses, hounds and the long chase after fox and good red deer; with horn and flagon and high home wassail in the hall—in those days was born William Jesse McDonald, September 28, 1852. His father, Enoch McDonald, was a planter of the feudal type—fearless, fond of the chase, the owner of wide acres and half a hundred slaves—while his grandfather, of the clan McDonald on his native heath, was a step nearer in the backward line to some old laird who led his men in roistering hunt or in bloody fray amid the green hills and in dim glens of Scotland.

That was good blood, and from his mother, who was a Durham—Eunice Durham—the little chap that was one day to be a leader on his own account inherited as clear a strain. The feudal hall in Mississippi, however, was a big, old plantation house, built of hewn logs and riven boards, with woods and cotton fields on every hand; with cabins for the slaves and outbuildings of every sort. That was in Kemper county, over near the Alabama line, with DeKalb, the county seat, about 20 miles away. It was a peculiar childhood that little "Bill Jess" McDonald had. It was full of such things as the homecoming of the hunters with a deer or a fox—sometimes (and these were grand occasions) even with a bear. Then there were wonderful ball games played by the Bogue Chita and Mucklutia Indians; exciting shooting matches and horse races, long fishing and swimming days with companions black and white, and the ever-recurring chase, with the bloodhounds, of some runaway slave. There was not much book-schooling in a semi-barbaric childhood such as that. There was a schoolhouse of course, which was used for a church and gatherings of any sort, and sometimes the children had lessons there. But the Kemper county teaching of that day was mainly to ride well, shoot straight and to act quickly in the face of danger. That was the proper education for the boy who was one day to make the Texas Panhandle and No-man's land his hunting ground, with men for his quarry.

Presence of mind he had as a gift, and it was early manifested. There was a lake not far away, where fishing and swimming went on almost continuously during the summer days, and sometimes the small swimmers would muddy the water near the shore and then catch the fish in their hands. They were doing this one day when Bill Jess was heard to announce, excitedly, "I've got him, boys! I've got him! You can't beat mine!" at the same instant swinging his catch high for them to see.

That was a correct statement. They couldn't beat his catch and they didn't want to. What they wanted to do was to get out of his neighborhood without any unnecessary delay, for the thing he held up to view was an immense, deadly moccasin, grasped with both hands by the neck, the rest of it curling instantly around the lower arm. His hold was so tight and so near the head that the snake could not bite him, but the problem was to turn it loose. His friends were all ashore and at a safe distance. He did not lose his head, however, but wading ashore himself he invited them one after another to unwind that snake. Nobody cared for the job and he told them in turn and collectively what he thought of them. Then he offered the honor to a little slave boy on attractive terms.

"Jim," he said, "if you all don't come an' unwind this heath snake, I'll beat you all to death an' cut off yo' ears an' skin you alive and give yo' carcasses to the buzzards."

Those were the days when a little slave-boy could not resist an earnest entreaty of that sort from the son of the household, and Jim came forward, his face gray with gratitude, and taking hold gingerly he unwound a yard or so of water-moccasin from Bill Jess, who, with the last coil, flung his prize to the ground, where it was quickly killed, it being well-nigh choked to death already.

But even the gift of presence of mind will sometimes balk at unfamiliar dangers. It was about this time that the civil war broke out, and Enoch McDonald enlisted a company to defend the southern cause. The little boy left behind was heart-broken. His father was his hero and when by and by the news came that the soldiers were encamped at Meridian—a railway station about 50 miles distant—the lad made up his mind to join them. He arrived at Meridian one morning and began to look over the ground and to make a few inquiries as to his father's headquarters. He had never seen a railroad before, and he followed along the track with increasing interest till he reached the engine, which he thought must be the most wonderful and beautiful thing ever created. Then suddenly it let off steam, the bell rang and the air was split by a screaming whistle. It was too sudden and too strange for his gift to work. The son of all the McDonaids and of a gallant soldier set out for the horizon, never pausing until halted by the sentry of his father's camp.

He was permitted to enter and was directed to the drill ground, where his father, who had been promoted for bravery to the rank of major, was superintending certain maneuvers. The little boy in his eagerness ran directly into the midst of things and Major McDonald, suddenly seeing him, was startled into the conclusion that some dire calamity had befallen his family and only Bill Jess had escaped to tell the tale. Half sliding, half falling, he dropped from his horse to learn the truth. Then gratefully he lifted the lad up behind him, and continued the drill. Eunice McDonald was only a day or two behind Bill Jess, for her instinct told her where the boy had gone. They remained a few days in camp and then bade their soldier good-by. They never saw him again, for he was killed at the battle of Corinth at the head of his regiment, his face to the enemy, as a soldier should die.

The boy of 12 was now the head of the household. He had his mother and a sister, and most of the negroes still remained; but he was the man of the house and was mature before his time.

The war ended at last and with it the Mc-

Donald fortune. Slaves and cotton were gone. Only a remnant of land, then worthless, remained. Eunice McDonald, widowed, with two children, her home left desolate by the ravages of war, knew not which way to turn. A bachelor brother with his face set Texasward offered to make a home for her in the new land. She accepted the offer and in 1866 they reached east Texas and settled in Rusk county, near Henderson, the county seat. Here the brother and sister made an effort to retrieve their broken fortunes, with moderate success.

But though still a boy in years, being not more than 16, his youth came really to an end now. It was the period of reconstruction in the south—a time of obnoxious enforcements on the one hand and rebellious bitterness on the other, with general lawlessness in the black settlements. The military dominated the towns and there were continuous misunderstandings between the still resentful conquerors and the aggressive, and sometimes insolent conquerors. Young McDonald, with the memory of his hero father shot dead while leading his regiment against these men in blue, was in no frame of mind to submit to any indignity, real or fancied, at their hands. It happened just at this time that one Col. Greene, a relative of the McDonaids, was murdered by negroes, who, being arrested, confessed the killing, stating that they had mistaken Greene for a mule-buyer supposed to have a large sum of money. The men were lodged in jail, but it was believed that under the "carpet-bag" military law then prevailing they would escape punishment. In later years young McDonald was to become one of the most strenuous defenders of official procedure—one of the bitterest opponents of lynch law the state of Texas has ever known; but he was hot-blooded in 'sixty-eight and the situation was not one to develop moral principles. When, therefore, a mob formed and took the negroes out of jail and hanged them there is no record of Bill Jess having distinguished himself in their defense, as he certainly would have done in later years. Indeed, it is likely that if he did not help pull a rope that night it was only because the rope was fully occupied with other willing hands.

Of course the military descended on Henderson and set in to discipline it for this concerted lawlessness. The townspeople as a whole, and the relatives of Col. Greene in particular, resented this occupation. Charley Greene, a brother of the murdered man, in company with Bill Jess, presently got into trouble with some soldiers who were deporting themselves in a manner considered offensive and the result was a running fight with the military in the lead. The soldiers made for their quarters in the courthouse. It would have been proper to leave them alone—to retire flushed with victory, as the books say, and satisfied. But Greene could not rest. He persuaded Bill Jess to stay with him and they rode up and down in front of the courthouse, occasionally taking a shot at the windows, to punctuate their challenge to warfare.

Finally Greene decided that they could charge the courthouse and capture it. He primed himself with liquor for the onset and refused to heed his companion's advice to abandon the campaign. The two ascended the courthouse stairs at last with pistols cocked. Greene had one in each hand and with them shoved open the double doors at the head of the stairs. That was another mistake. The soldiers were "laying for him" just inside and in an instant later his arms were pinioned and he was a prisoner. The doors swung to, then, and Bill Jess stood outside, wondering whether he ought to charge to the rescue, wait there and be captured or retire in good order. With that gift of logic and rare presence of mind which would one day make him famous he decided to get out of there. No attempt was made at the time to arrest young McDonald, though soldiers frequently loitered about his home premises and with these he had many collisions, usually coming off victorious.

Still, he was laying up trouble for himself, for Greene's court-martial was coming off and Bill Jess, who went over to see if he could be of any assistance, was promptly arrested while nosing about the stockade and landed with his relative on the inside. This was a serious matter. The boy realized that, as soon as the gates closed behind him. He realized it still more forcibly when a few days later he and Greene were led into the courtroom for military trial and he took a look at the men who were to prosecute him for siding in the crime of treason. Nor was he reassured when one of the lawyers present announced that he would "defend that boy's case." For there was nothing inspiring about this champion's appearance. His eyes were half-closed and he had a general air of sleepy indifference which did not disappear until it came his turn to take part in the proceedings. Then suddenly the sleepy eyes became alive, the shaggy hair was tossed back, the clay pipe was laid on the table and Dave Culberson, afterward known as an eminent lawyer and statesman, arose and made such a plea in behalf of the boy whose father had died at Corinth and whose mother and sister relied on him to-day for protection, that only one verdict remained in the minds of his hearers when he closed. Bill Jess was acquitted, but his relative, Charley Greene, was less fortunate. He remained in a north-



HE CROSSED THE SABINE RIVER INTO SMITH COUNTY, TEXAS, WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN, AND BECAME AN OFFICIAL FIGHTER.

ern prison many years before he was finally released. Dave Culberson afterwards represented his district in congress and the boy he defended eventually served the son, Charles G. Culberson—then governor—now United States senator from Texas.

It is likely this bit of experience with hot-headed lawlessness and the result thereof proved of immense value to young McDonald. From that time forward we find him a peacemaker, a queller of disturbances, a separator of combatants, even at great personal risk. After a brief sojourn at Longview he established himself in Wood county, at Mineola, then a newly established and busy railway terminus. This was in 1875 and his venture was a success. Soon he was considered the leading grocer of the town.

It was during this period that McDonald made the acquaintance of James S. Hogg, who in later life, as governor of Texas, was to confer his most useful official position—that of ranger captain—thus enabling him to do much of the work which has identified his name with the state's constructive history. Hogg, then a young man, was justice of the peace at the county seat, Quitman, a few miles distant from Mineola, and was also conducting a paper there. He bought his groceries of McDonald and the account ran along in a go-as-you-please sort of a way. They were good friends and courted together and it was through Hogg that young McDonald met Miss Rhoda Isabel Carter, a young woman with fine nerve and force of character—just the girl for a Texas regulator's wife. And such, in due time, she was to become, for he married her in January, 1876. His friendship for Hogg continued for some time after that, but came to a sudden end one day, when Hogg, who had been elected county attorney, with characteristic conscientiousness prosecuted McDonald and others for carrying concealed weapons—McDonald's possession of such a weapon having been revealed by his aiding in the capture of a gang of boisterous disturbers of the peace. McDonald rose and defended his own case, declaring he had quit business to do his duty as a good citizen and that he would stay in jail the balance of his days before he would pay a fine.

With his usual frank fearlessness, he said some hard things to Hogg in the presence of the court, and though discharged the two were estranged for a considerable period. Then a truce was patched up, but only for a time.

But now came Bill McDonald's first official appointment and service. Living just outside of Mineola was a man named Gordon, of hard character and the owner of several bulldogs, similarly endowed. Man and dogs became a menace to travel in that neighborhood, as they lived near a public road and were allowed at large. The man was particularly quarrelsome and ugly and was said to have killed several more or less inoffensive persons. He always carried arms—the customary pistol and a bowie knife, the latter worn in a scabbard "down his back." He was an expert at throwing this weapon and altogether a terror to the community. Bill McDonald would naturally resent the domination of a man like Gordon and when one day the latter came to town with one of his unruly dogs and the dog set upon and injured McDonald's prized pointer there was trouble active and immediate. McDonald's reputation as a good man to let alone was already established at Mineola. He was known as a capable marksman—fearless, resolute and very sudden. When, therefore, he produced a six-shooter for the avowed purpose of killing the bulldog, its master, who, like every bully by trade, was a coward at heart, interceded humbly for the dog's life, promising to take the animal home and leave him there. McDonald agreed to the arrangement, but for the benefit of the community at large he promptly applied to Sheriff Pete Dowell for a commission as deputy, in order that in future he might restrain officially the obnoxious Gordon and others of his kind. The commission was promptly conferred and thus Bill Jess McDonald, quietly and without any special manifest, stepped into the ranks of Texas official regulators, where, in one capacity or another, he was to serve so long and well.

But however quiet his enlistment, his service was to be of another sort. Those were not quiet days, and the officer who set out to enforce the law was apt to become a busy person. Gordon very soon appeared again in Mineola, and after investing in a good deal of bad whisky went on the warpath flourishing a six-shooter and giving out the information that nobody could arrest him. He was in the very midst of a militant harangue when Deputy McDonald suddenly appeared on the scene and before Gordon could gather himself he was, by some magic "twist of the wrist" disarmed, arrested and on the way to the calaboose. He demurred and resisted, but slept that night behind lock and bars. Next morning he refused breakfast and demanded release. Deputy McDonald left him in a mixed condition of

reflection and profanity, returning at noon to find him sober, subdued and hungry. Upon promise of good behavior for the future, he was taken before a justice, where he pleaded guilty and paid a fine. Then he took his place as the first example of a long line of wonderful cures set down to Capt. Bill McDonald's credit today, for he gave little trouble after that and remained mostly in retirement, to be set upon at last by his own dogs and killed.

But the Gordon experience was mild enough, after all, compared to the many which followed, and is only set down because it marks the beginning of a career. Indeed, an episode of larger proportions was already underway. In the timber lying adjacent to Mineola some 300 tie cutters were encamped, supplying cross-ties for the I. & G. N. road. They were a drinking, lawless lot and on Saturday nights the Mineola streets were filled with riot and disorder. The city marshal, George Reeves, and Deputy McDonald had on several occasions made arrests and such enforcement of the law had been regarded by the tie-gang as an affront to all. They sent word to the officers, at last, that they would be on hand in full force on the following Saturday and that the calaboose might as well go out of commission so far as they were concerned.

Saturday night came, and according to promise the tie-cutters were on the street, numerous and noisy. Seeing a commotion at the rear of a cheap hotel, where a number of the men had gathered, McDonald went over there and found Reeves surrounded. Without hesitation he shoved a way through with his pistol until he stood by Reeves' side. Reeves had arrested a man and a general riot was imminent. The prisoner was very drunk and disorderly and demanding that he be allowed to go to his room. Catching the drift of matters, McDonald said:

"All right, take him to his room, if he's got one; I'll take care of this crowd."

There was something in the business-like confidence of that statement which impressed the crowd. And then he had such a handy way of holding a six-shooter. Nobody quite wanted to die first and Reeves started for the back entrance of the hotel with his man. As they entered the door the fellow reeled against the casing and fell to the ground. Then a general stampede started, for it was called out that Reeves had struck him. McDonald said:

"Stop, you fellers! The fool fell down. I'll kill the first man that interferes!"

That was another discouraging statement from a man who had a habit of keeping his word. It seemed to the crowd that an officer like that didn't play fair. He didn't argue at all. Somebody was likely to get hurt if they didn't get that gun away from him. Movements to this end were started here and there, but they didn't get near enough to the chief actor to be effective. Finally, when Reeves and his prisoner set out for the calaboose, the crowd moved in that direction, timing their steps to a chorus of threats and profanity. Reeves and McDonald made no reply until they arrived at the lock-up; then, the disturbers being there handy, the officers began gathering them in, a dozen at a time. It was a genuine surprise party for the tie-men. They were too much astonished for any concerted movement, and when invited at the points of those guns to step inside and make themselves at home they did not have the bad taste to refuse.

The turbulent tie-men were sober and sensible by Monday morning and allowed to go, under promise of good behavior.

Mineola suddenly became a moral town. Amusements of the old sort languished.

But by this time Deputy Bill Jess was not satisfied with the quiet life. He had found his proper vocation—that of active enforcement of the law—and he was moved to pursue it in remoter places. A certain desperate outlaw by the name of Jim Bean had committed crimes in Smith county, whence he had escaped to Kansas. There he had killed a city marshal and returned once more to Smith county, which adjoins Wood on the south. This was the kind of game that Deputy Bill always enjoyed hunting. It was worth while. He made frequent still-hunts along the Sabine river, the dividing line between Wood and Smith, hoping to locate his quarry. He had heard a rumor that a certain family of swamp-dwellers were in league with the men, and, reflecting on the matter, he concluded to visit this house, both for the purpose of investigation and to borrow a shotgun, which he thought might be more useful in a man-chase than his rifle. Arriving at the suspected house, he told in his mildest manner a tale of a wounded deer not far away and borrowed a shotgun as well as the information that the men and dogs of the place were in the brakes. He now began a careful still-hunt for his game and presently came full upon Jim Bean, who was on a horse, with a shotgun, guarding some stolen hogs.

Before Bean could move now Deputy McDonald had him covered and commanded him to get off his horse or he would shoot him dead. Bean obeyed and McDonald threw his leg over his saddle and slid to the ground, still covering Bean with his gun. Suddenly Bean made a dash for a large tree, turning to shoot just as he reached this cover. McDonald was too quick, however, and let go with a load of buckshot, which struck Bean in several places, causing him to make off in the direction of a slough toward thick hiding. McDonald now mounted his horse and started in pursuit of the wounded Jim Bean. Blood-stains made the trail easy to follow. Soon a powder horn and then a pair of boots lay in the path of flight. McDonald followed six miles to a cabin occupied by negroes. Bean was not in the cabin, but barefoot prints led into the woods. The man-hunter followed them and finally overtook their owner. It was not Bean. The officer had been tricked—Bean had escaped while his pursuer had been following this false lead. It was dark now and further search was hopeless. Next morning the outlaws had vanished from the country. They never returned and were heard of no more until some time after, when news came from Wise county that both the Bean brothers had been killed resisting arrest.

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### WHAT BECAME OF THE BUTTON

Naive Confession of Little Girl Proved Her to Be True Daughter of Eve.

Lola Fuller, the noted dancer, told at a luncheon a story about her class of dancing children.

"I gave the children a Christmas party last year," she said, "and when the pudding came on I said to them: 'I have put in this pudding a coin, a little china doll and a button. Whoever gets the coin will be rich. Whoever gets the doll will be married before the year is out. But whoever gets the button will be an old maid.'"

"Well, the pudding disappeared rapidly, and the little girls soon found the coin and the china doll. But the button did not turn up. No one got the button. This amazed me.

"That night I said to my favorite little girl, as we sat alone by the fire in my room: 'I can't understand what became of that button. I put it in the pudding myself.'"

"I'll tell you," the little girl confessed, turning rosy with confusion. "I dot the button. But I didn't want everybody to laugh at me—the I thwallowed it."

The Kind Caddie. "Once in a game," said the golfer. "I had the good fortune to be six holes up on my opponent by the time the eighth hole was reached. At the eighth green something went wrong with our reckoning of the strokes and I claimed that I had won that hole, too, while my opponent claimed that it was halved. After a mild dispute I yielded.

"But as I moved on with my caddie I couldn't help grumbling: 'Well, you know, Joseph, I gave up; but I still think I won that hole after all.'"

"The boy, with a frown, turned shocked and reproving eyes on me. Disgusted with my greed for holes, he whispered hurriedly, so that my opponent should not overhear: 'Shut up, can't you? Do ye want to break the man's heart?'"

Point of View. Senator Beveridge, apropos of the old-fashioned snowy Christmas, said the other day:

"Snow, of course, has its disadvantages from some points of view. 'Snow is beautiful in its season,' Solomon said that. But I know an old Indianapolis man who, on hearing this remark of Solomon, grumbled:

"Oh, yes, no doubt it was beautiful to you, sittin' with all the wives and asses of Jerusalem beside you; but if you'd been a poor stone cutter you'd never have said any such thing."

Truth "Sassier" Than Fiction. Most southerners are gallant. An exception is the Georgian who gave his son this advice:

"My boy, never run after a woman or a street car—there will be another one along in a minute or two."—Everybody's Magazine.

### A WOMAN DOCTOR

Was Quick to See that Coffee was Doing the Mischief.

A lady tells of a bad case of coffee poisoning and tells it in a way so simple and straightforward that literary skill could not improve it.

"I had neuragic headaches for 12 years," she says, "and suffered untold agony. When I first began to have them I weighed 140 pounds, but they brought me down to 110. I went to many doctors and they gave me only temporary relief. So I suffered on, till one day a woman doctor told me to use Postum. She said I looked like I was coffee poisoned.

"So I began to drink Postum and I gained 15 pounds in the first few weeks and continued to gain, but not so fast as at first. My headaches began to leave me after I had used Postum about two weeks—long enough to get the coffee poison out of my system.

"Since I began to use Postum I can gladly say that I never know what a neuragic headache is like any more, and it was nothing but Postum that made me well. Before I used Postum I never went out alone; I would get bewildered and would not know which way to turn. Now I go alone and my head is as clear as a bell. My brain and nerves are stronger than they have been for years."

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.