



CAMEO KIRBY

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



(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER VIII.

THE journey to the Randall plantation, occupying a full day, marked an epoch in Eugene Kirby's life—a fact of which from its inception he was entirely unconscious. Without a single exception it was the first time in fifteen years that he had been received on a footing of equality—even intimacy—with that high type of womanhood to which his birth entitled him and which had been forfeited when he had yielded to the lure of the river and the wiles of evil companions. And, even though he did not forget that his present standing had been won by grace of a girl's ready sympathy, the knowledge did not interfere with a thorough enjoyment and appreciation of the moment.

Under the impression that they were entertaining Colonel Moreau, benefactor and champion of the Randall family, Miss Pleydell and Miss Davzac yielded the more readily to Kirby's charm of manner, while the General, conscious that he was acting in some mysterious way as the secret and trusty friend of his halfbrother's escape hero, hung on the latter's every word.

Indeed, a more impregnable audience would have found their entertainer irresistible, for Kirby put forth every effort to please, his payment a laugh from Adele or a flush in her pale cheek. Nor were his efforts prompted by egotism, any longing for self-exploitation; rather, in fact, they were spontaneous, a tribute to the goddess Fortune, which had graciously associated him with a type of femininity which he had longed to meet and despaired of so doing.

Thus, with its four occupants in the happiest frame of mind and on the best of terms, the roomy, close topped carriage, its sleepy negro driver monotonously clucking at the horses, jogged placidly over the sunlit roads, while Anatole Veaudry, riding gloomily behind, winced whenever he heard Adele's fresh and care free laughter. It was an unwonted sound, and more than once he caught himself commenting that it was as unwelcome.

Meanwhile Kirby's good angel—if a professional gambler may be permitted to own one—was in another direction looking after his interests with unabated zeal, postponing his exposure and consequently prolonging his intimacy with the Randalls.

It must be remembered that only Tom Randall and his cousin Aaron had met Colonel Moreau, and thus Kirby's exposure as an impostor could only come from these two. The hot headed, vengeful boy was still busy scouring New Orleans for his supposed enemy, and thus his presence at the plantation would be indefinitely postponed until he had either succeeded in tracking Kirby or had abandoned all hope of so doing.

On the other hand, however, Aaron, heeding his cousin's wishes, had accompanied Croup to the plantation, where he confidently expected to find Judge Pleydell, who had preceded him thither; but, learning on his arrival that the latter had ridden over to the plantation, Aaron immediately followed. It so happened, however, that Judge Pleydell, completing his errand, had returned to the Randalls and, taking a short cut through a lane which connected the two estates, unwittingly passed Aaron, who had followed the highroad. Thus when Kirby and the ladies eventually arrived the old judge, supported by a jubilant crowd of negro field hands and domestic servants,

was the only one to welcome them. Standing on the steps of the wide veranda while she swung her bonnet by its strings, Adele, smiling and flushing by turns, boldly introduced the pseudo Moreau to her family's old friend.

"Colonel Moreau, this is indeed a happy and propitious occasion," warmly responded the judge, while he shook Kirby by the hand. "And never in my life have I seen so delightful and welcome an alteration as is apparent in the health and spirits of the young mistress of this plantation. What is the magic secret to account for so great a change since last evening?"

"Ah, it was the ride!" demurely suggested his daughter, glancing from Adele to Kirby.

"The ride!" echoed Miss Davzac. "Mais—non. It was that charming Colonel Moreau. I think he brings the sunshine we have been waiting for so long."

While the others, with the exception of the moody and despondent M. Veaudry, entered the house, Adele, offering the excuse that she wished to see her roses again, sought flower basket and scissors and, accompanied by the indomitable Kirby, repaired to the garden, Anatole watching them with broody, longing eyes.

Presently he became aware that another was as interested as himself, and, turning, he found Croup at his elbow. The old serving man continued for some time to silently scan Kirby's retreating figure.

"Who you say were dat genaman's name, Marse Anatole?" he at length inquired.

"Colonel Moreau," abstractedly replied M. Veaudry.

"Yes, seh. Yes, seh," acknowledged Croup. "Dat's de name what he done give. Yes, seh." But he was far from satisfied and, still shaking his head and mumbling to himself, returned indoors. Certainly neither Kirby nor Croup—quondam servant and youthful master—had the remotest idea that, after a separation of so many years, they had finally met.

Meanwhile Aaron Randall had returned from his abortive mission only to learn that the elusive Judge Pleydell had again left, this time to ride over to the steamboat landing for expected letters. But Adele's elderly cousin was too excited to longer trouble himself concerning the judge's erratic movements, for he had learned that Colonel Moreau had, after all, accompanied the ladies and was at that very moment with Adele in the garden.

"Why, then," he exclaimed to M. Veaudry, who had been his informant, "this can mean only one thing—Cameo Kirby is dead!" And he tersely related the meeting at the oaks even down to the detail of Moreau taking the late John Randall's pistol. "Tom secretly followed the colonel," he finished, "and it's devilish strange he didn't return with him. I don't understand it."

But M. Veaudry was only thinking of this added advantage which his rival had gained in the eyes of Adele.

"Ah, he has one more privilege—I have to envy him!" he exclaimed. "I see he is a gentleman and does not boast. Also it is that he would not wish the ladies to know. I shall seek opportunity to congratulate him when he is not in their presence. I should not think it honor of me to be slow with my felicitations—Ah, I shall do it now."

He turned as Kirby emerged from the garden, Adele having halted some distance down the path.

"...with a bow, 'or the great privilege you have had today. We know by the pleasure to see you alive that there is one great scoundrel which is not."

"Who's that?" asked Kirby, lighting a cheroot.

"I offer you congratulation," pursued the young creole formally and rather stiffly, "that you have earned the gratitude of all good people."

"What for?"

"Because you have the honor to kill that Cameo Kirby."

The other with perfect composure gravely eyed his cheroot, while he successfully concealed all evidence of any other feeling.

"Well," he said courteously, "I all ways hoped that nobody but myself would kill that fellow. I suppose many have wished to, but they didn't have my luck."

"But most I congratulate you, M. le Colonel," finished Anatole, his voice tremulous with emotion, "is that you have earned so much gratitude—here," making an eloquent gesture toward the house.

This time Kirby could not conceal his astonishment. "And why should that have earned me so much gratitude—here?" he asked bluntly, imitating the other's gesture.

Before M. Veaudry could reply Adele had joined the group.

"Anatole has presented you to the colonel?" she inquired, turning to her cousin. Then, heedless of his evident amazement, she gayly continued, turning to Kirby: "This is our good cousin Aaron. Aaron, you will be glad to know that this gentleman is Colonel Moreau. I have the honor to present you."

"Colonel Moreau!" gasped Aaron, aghast. "Why—why—I met Colonel Moreau—this morning!"

Adele started and paled as, too late, she fully realized the truth. But Kirby remained the same courteous, amiable and care free gentleman of the carriage, while he eyed Aaron steadily. "Does it seem to you that I have changed since we last met?" he blandly inquired. "Perhaps you would hardly know me for the same man? In fact, if Miss Adele hadn't told you that I am Colonel Moreau you would not have believed it? But you take her word for it, don't you?"

After a long, tense silence the bewildered Aaron gravely inclined his head, saying, "Yes, I take her word."

"Ah, I thought so," gently commented Kirby, and, bowing, he joined Miss Pleydell and the General in the garden.

"Cousin Aaron," said Adele earnestly, "I did introduce that gentleman as Colonel Moreau. I know just what I am doing. I ask you to trust me until Tom comes, because I ought to tell him first. Will you do it?" And, again, Aaron, after a momentary struggle, assented.

When the girl had rejoined Kirby in the garden, M. Veaudry, who had been an interested spectator of the little tableau, exchanged with his companion a significant glance of grave suspicion.

"He mus' have changed quickly, this colonel, since you saw him this morning," he commented dryly. "I think—But who is this gentleman?" turning to confront Larkin Bunce, who, mopping his inflamed face with a dusty sleeve, had thrown himself from his weary horse and boldly entered the gate. In fact, he had ridden at a breakneck pace all the way from New Orleans.

"Your servant, sir," he greeted, bow-

ing to Aaron. "I'm lookin' for the gentleman who come here in the carriage with the ladies."

"Ah," exclaimed Mr. Randall, closely scanning the other, "you're the gentleman who came to see Colonel Moreau this morning. Do you wish to see him now?"

Bunce started violently, turning as pale as his overheated condition permitted. "Good God, no!" he exclaimed.

"But it was Colonel Moreau who accompanied the ladies," explained Aaron. "And, sir, here he is now."

The old gambler turned with a subdued exclamation of alarm, as if fully expecting to see the ghost of the late lamented Moreau. But instead his startled eyes met those of his partner, who, humming softly to himself, was calmly approaching, a white camellia in his hand.

"Come, cheer up, Mr. Bunce. I hope I see you well," greeted Kirby. Then, politely turning to Aaron, he added: "Mr. Bunce is confused. His long ride in the heat has been too much for him. Mr. Bunce is my secretary. He looks robust, but is, in fact, very delicate. Might I so far trespass upon your hospitality as to beg a cooling draft for him?"

Aaron bowed gravely and, accompanied by M. Veaudry, retired indoors. They had hardly left when Bunce's long repressed emotion overcame him.

"A coolin' draft," he echoed, with violent scorn. "I want a drink, and let it be strong, friend. I always knowed you was a fool, Gene Kirby, but I never knowed it was as bad as this. All the names in the

world to pick from, and you chose the name of Jack Moreau! Why, dog my cats!"

"Chance, Larkin, chance," returned Kirby, quite unmoved. "It was the angel of chance who gave me the name."

"Angels? Angels?" caught up the other, his voice faint with the violence of his sarcasm. "Darned if I ain't lost my hearin'. I'll be dogged if I ain't delirious. Skin me if it don't seem like I'm settin' out in a garden and beatin' Gene Kirby talkin' about angels. It sounded jest like his voice. 'Angels,' he says. Him—Cameo Kirby! Poor old Gene Kirby! Why, you mush brained chucklehead," he finished angrily, "don't you know that Tom Randall's been raisin' b— all over New Orleans, tryin' to run you down?"

"Well, what of it?"

Bunce, making a gesture eloquent of despair, feebly sought the garden seat and mopped his inflamed face anew. "He asks me what of that," he wailed to the surrounding scenery. "You pore, wanderin' junnie! You know blame well that of all places on earth this is the last you should have tumbled into. Now," with sudden energy and decision, "git ready to git out—quick! My boss is dead beat, but git your angel to loan you one and slope for the river. I'll catch you up at



"IT WAS THE ANGEL OF CHANCE WHO GAVE ME THE NAME."

Natchez."

But Kirby calmly refused the proffered riding whip.

"What's all the reason I shouldn't stay here?" he demanded. "Why should I expect danger from these people—Mme. Davzac, a Miss Pleydell and her father, a creole named Veaudry and a Miss Adele?"

"Miss Adele who?" bellowed Bunce. "I don't know. That's all I've heard them call her."

Here the fates again intervened in the name of procrastination, for before Bunce could inform his partner that he was the guest of the family which, thanks to the efforts of Colonel Moreau, was his sworn enemy the ladies entered, and to the fleshy gambler's infinite disgust, anger and misery he was again promptly introduced by Kirby as "my secretary." Moreover, despite his utmost efforts he eventually found himself pledged to remain the night.

"But I durstn't do it, ma'am," he had expostulated to the smiling and indomitable Mme. Davzac. "Me and Kirby—I mean me and Colonel Moreau got to git right out of here. There's some mighty pressin' business waitin' for us—specially for him, ma'am."

"Ah, but you will make pospone that business," she returned. "I've already had your horse taken to the stables. Colonel Moreau, he says he will do us the honor to dine with us and remain the night, and that decides it. You are his friend and secretar'— So I shall see you at dinner, M. Bunce. Croup, the gentleman's room."

And Larkin, making an uncouth bow, swallowed his curses and followed the old servant. Passing Kirby, he breathed scornfully, "If I was some people I'd find out more about other people."

Alone with Adele, Kirby leaned against the old sundial and attentively watched her deftly arrange in the basket her freshly gathered bunch of flowers.

"Your friend evidently thinks you are not safe here," she said at length. "But you won't go? I—I know you are safe here."

"I doubt it," he calmly interrupted. "Why?" sharply, looking up with startled, wounded eyes.

"Because you are giving me a longer time to remember your kindness than I expected, and I'm afraid I'm finding that that isn't the safest thing in the world for me."

"Great danger in that, sir?" she gayly asked.

He joined in her laugh, but his eyes were half serious. "People who play with fire—"

"Ah, but I don't believe you are a coward, sir. Of what was your friend afraid?"

"Well, mainly he seemed disturbed because I didn't know your name," smiled Kirby.

"But you do."

"Pardon, I don't. This is the first time I've been alone with you since we started. I've only heard you called 'Miss Adele.' I don't even know whose plantation this is."

"Neither—do—we," she added sadly. "I—I want to show you something." And, as if yielding to a sudden impulse, she unfastened from about her neck a jeweled miniature and handed it to her companion.

Kirby instantly recognized it as a portrait of the late John Randall, and in a breath the full significance of Bunce's observations came to him. Amazed, he looked from the miniature to Adele, then to the house and back again to her. Observing his emotion, she whispered, "You knew my father?"

"I met him—once," replied Kirby, taking a deep breath.

"I was proud of him," she continued steadily, refastening the miniature about her neck, "and I am not the less proud of him now. You have heard how he died? Then you understand why we do not know whose plantation this is; that we hold it at the mercy of—Cameo Kirby." She dragged forth the name with an accent and gesture of unpeakable fear and loathing.

"Your brother took Moreau's word for what happened that night, didn't he?" asked Kirby steadily.

"Certainly. Had not Colonel Moreau shown himself my father's friend?" she returned.

"It seems to me that Moreau's word has gone for a good deal with your family," he commented, with veiled bitterness.

"And why not? Do we need any one's word upon a notorious adventurer who lives by gambling," she asked, with some asperity, "any one's word upon a creature who preyed upon the weakness of a good man like my father?"

"But has it ever occurred to you," he returned quietly, "that possibly this Kirby might never intend to claim the plantation?"

"No! No!" she interrupted vehemently, shaking her head. "He is too infamous. But I don't want to think of him today. A change has come over me, and—somehow the world is a different place"— She stopped and then, with flushed cheeks and hurried breath, added: "I feel as if I had been living a long time in the shad-

ows—shadows full of darkness and ugly thoughts. But it has lifted today somehow. What is it?"

She turned, asking the question with wondering eyes, her face transfigured.



"YOU KNEW MY FATHER?"

And as if the heavens, bearing out her statement, offered a sign which presaged future peace and happiness, a surcease from all tribulation and suffering, the final and complete obliteration of the shadows of the past, the looming sun, peeping from over the distant horizon, bestowed its last caress upon Adele Randall, transforming her somber dress into one of gayety and splendor. True to M. Veaudry's prophecy, it appeared as if her long affected mourning was to be at length discarded; but, contrary to that gentleman's long cherished hopes, his was not the personality to induce the metamorphosis.

(To be continued.)

C. O. KNODELL'S MOTHER PASSES AWAY SUDDENLY

C. O. Knodell has received the sad news of the sudden death of his mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Knodell, of Albion, Ill., passed away at the home of her son, Henry Knodell, in Chicago, July 28. Mrs. Knodell had eaten supper and had gone out on the porch when the family heard the door bell ring. Answering the call she was found sitting in a chair by the door dead. She had evidently felt the stroke coming and had rung the bell to summon help. Five children survive her. Deceased had long been a resident of Albion and her sudden death is mourned by a host of friends in her home town.

STRUCK BY FALLING TREE AND KILLED

John Williams, a sawmill man of Wallowa, was killed Tuesday while cutting down trees for saw logs. He was struck by a limb from a dead tree which was struck by the tree he was felling. Mr. Williams was one of the firm of McLaughlin & Williams who operate a saw mill on Bear creek near Wallowa. He was about 46 years old and leaves a wife and four children.

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Hinshaw, who had been visiting their relatives, Mrs. R. W. Bloom and family, left Tuesday for their home at Union, Iowa.

Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Jordan brought their little daughter Emily home from La Grande Thursday. The little patient is improving slowly.

Miss A. R. Merryman, of Denver, is a guest of her brother, County Surveyor H. E. Merryman and family. Miss Merryman has been a teacher in the public schools of Denver for a number of years.

Mrs. W. J. Funk and daughter Miss Margaret, of Oakland, Calif., concluded a delightful visit with relatives and friends in Wallowa county Friday morning. They will visit a few days in Portland before continuing their journey home. Mr. Funk will remain here until Sunday.

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Doors and windows and all kinds of builders hardware at Keltner's. S. C. Himelwright, of The Park and C. L. Puderbaugh, of Fruita, were in town Friday. Mr. Himelwright will be a candidate for county commissioner at the coming election.

Miss Mella White, of Portland, came Wednesday to visit at the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. W. White. Miss White is a teacher in the Portland schools. She is a niece of Mr. White.

Mrs. Martin Larsen has returned from Hot Lake where she underwent a surgical operation. She stopped off at Elgin a few days on the return journey.

A very enjoyable evening was spent last Saturday, August 6, at the home of Miss Ruby Fosner in honor of her 14th birthday. Those present were Muriel and Herbert Chenoweth, Charley Litch, Wayne Wagner, Asa Hulise, Aubrey Haney, Ronald Wagner, Zora Combes, Grace Chenoweth, Ethel McKinney, Anna Emmons, Zola Wright, Cecil Stubblefield, Carrie Falconer, Lela Pace, Ruby Fosner. The evening was spent in playing games, after which refreshments were served. Many beautiful presents were received.

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