

MOLLY McDONALD

A TALE OF THE FRONTIER



By
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Author of "Keith of the Border," "My Lady of the South," etc., etc.

Illustrations by
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SYNOPSIS.

Major McDonald, commanding an army post near Fort Dodge, seeks a man to intercept his daughter, Molly, who is headed for the post. An Indian outbreak is threatening. "Brick" Hamlin, sergeant who has just arrived with messages to McDonald, volunteers for the mission. Molly arrives at Fort Dodge two days ahead of schedule. She decides to push on to Fort Dodge by stage in company with "Sutler Bill" Moylan. Gaskins, a gambler, is also a passenger. Hamlin meets the stage with stories of depredations committed by the Indians. The driver deserts the stage when Indians appear. The Indians are twice repulsed. Hamlin and Molly escape in the darkness. Molly is wounded. Hamlin is much excited at finding a haversack marked C. S. A. He explains to Molly that he was in the Confederate service and dismissed in disgrace under charges of cowardice. At the close of the war he enlisted in the regular service. He says the haversack was the property of one Capt. LeFevre, who he suspects of being responsible for his disgrace. Troops appear and under escort of Lieut. Gaskins Molly starts to join her father. Hamlin leaves to rejoin his regiment. He returns to Fort Dodge after a summer of fighting Indians, and finds Molly there. Shots are heard in the night. Hamlin rushes out, sees what he believes is the figure of Molly hiding in the darkness and falls over the body of Lieutenant Gaskins, who accuses Hamlin of shooting him. The sergeant is proven innocent. He sees Molly in company with Mrs. Dupont, whom he recognizes as a former sweetheart, who threw him over for LeFevre. Mrs. Dupont tells Hamlin LeFevre forced her to send him a lying note.

CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

"Because I chance to know more than you suppose. Never mind how the information reached me; had it been less authentic you might find me now more susceptible to your presence, more choice in my language. A carefully conceived plot drove me from the Confederate service, in which you were as deeply involved as LeFevre. His double object was to advance him in rank and get me out of the way. The plan worked perfectly; I could have met and fought either object alone, but the two combined broke me utterly. I had no spirit of resistance left. Yet even then—in spite of that miserable letter—I retained faith in you. I returned home to learn the truth from your own lips, only to discover you had already gone. I was a month learning the facts; then I discovered you had married LeFevre in Richmond; I procured the affidavit of the officiating clergyman. Will you deny now?"

"No," changing her manner instantly—"what is the use? I married the man, but I was deceived, misled. There was no conspiracy in which I was concerned. I did not know where you were; from then until this afternoon I never saw or heard of you. Molly told me of her rescue by a soldier named Hamlin, but I never suspected the truth until we drove by the barracks. Then I yielded to my first mad impulse and sent that note. If you felt toward me with such bitterness, why did you come here? Why consent to meet me again?"

"My yielding was to a second impulse. At first I decided to ignore your note; then came the second consideration—Miss McDonald."

"Oh," and she laughed, "at last I read the riddle. Not satisfied with saving that young lady from savages, you would also preserve her youthful innocence from the contamination of my influence. Quite noble of you, surely. Are you aware of our relationship?"

"I have heard it referred to—garrison rumor."

"Quite true. In spite of your source of information, which accounts, in a measure, for my presence here as

well as my intimacy in the McDonald household. And you propose interfering, plan to drive me forth from this pleasant bird's nest. Really you amuse me, Mr. Sergeant Hamlin."

"But I have not proposed anything of that nature," the man said quietly, rising to his feet. "It is, of course, nothing to me, except that Miss McDonald has been very kind and seems a very nice girl. As I knew something of you and your past, I thought perhaps you might realize how much better it would be to retire gracefully."

"You mean that as a threat? You intend to tell her?"

"Not unless it becomes necessary; I am not proud of the story myself."

Their eyes met, and there was no shadow of softness in either face. The woman's lips curled sarcastically.

"Really, you take yourself quite seriously, do you not? One might think you still Major of the Fourth Texas, and heir to the old estate on the Brazos. You talked that way to me once before, only to discover that I had claws with which to scratch. Don't make that mistake again, Mr. Sergeant Hamlin, or there will be something more serious than scratching done. I have learned how to fight in the past few years—Heaven knows I have had opportunity—and rather enjoy the excitement. How far would your word go with Molly, do you think? Or with the Major?"

"That remains to be seen."

"Does it? Oh, I understand. You must still consider yourself quite the lady-killer. Well, let me tell you something—she is engaged to Lieutenant Gaskins."

His hand-grip tightened on the rail, but there was no change in the expression of his face.

"So I had heard. I presume that hardly would have been permitted to happen but for the existence of a Mr. Dupont. By the way, which one of your ladies shot the Lieutenant?"

It was a chance fire, and Hamlin was not sure of its effect, although she drew a quick breath, and her voice faltered.

"Shot—Lieutenant Gaskins?"

"Certainly; you must be aware of that."

"Oh, I knew he had some altercation, and was wounded; he accused you, did he not? But why bring us into the affair?"

"Because some woman was directly concerned in it. Whoever she may be, the officers of the fort are convinced that she probably fired the shot; that the Lieutenant knows her identity, and is endeavoring to shield her from discovery."

"Why do they think that? What reason can they have for such a conclusion? Was she seen?"

"Her footprints were plainly visible, and the revolver used was a small one—a .36"—such as a woman alone would carry in this country. I have said so to no one else, but I saw her, crouching in the shadow of the barrack wall."

"You—you saw her? Recognized her?"

"Yes."

"And made no attempt at arrest? Have not even mentioned the fact to others? You must have a reason?"

"I have, Mrs. Dupont, but we will not discuss it now. I merely wish you to comprehend that if it is to be war between us, I am in possession of weapons."

She had not lost control of herself, yet there was that about her hesitancy of speech, her quick breathing, which evidenced her surprise at this discovery. It told him that he had played a good hand, had found a point of weakness in her armor. The mystery of it remained unsolved, but this woman knew who had shot Gaskins; knew, and had every reason to guard the secret. He felt her eyes anxiously searching his face, and laughed a little bitterly.

"You perceive, madam, 'he went on, encouraged by her silence, 'I am not now exactly the same unsuspecting youth with whom you played so easily years ago. I have learned some of life's lessons since; among them how to fight fire with fire. It is a trick of the plains. Do you still consider it necessary for your happiness to remain the guest of the McDonalds?"

She straightened up, turning her eyes away.

"Probably not for long, but it is no threat of yours which influences me. It does not even interest me to know who shot Lieutenant Gaskins. He is

a vulgar little prig, only made possible by the possession of money. However, when I decide to depart, I shall probably do so without consulting your pleasure." She hesitated, her voice softening as though in change of mood. "Yet I should prefer parting with you in friendship. In asking you to meet me tonight I had no intention of quarreling; merely yielded to an impulse of regret for the past."

The heavy curtain draping the window was drawn aside, permitting the light from within to flash upon them, revealing the figure of a man in uniform.

"Pardon my interruption," he explained, bowing, "but you were gone so long, Mrs. Dupont, I feared some accident."

She laughed lightly.

"You are very excusable. No doubt I have been here longer than I supposed."

The officer's eyes surveyed the soldier standing erect, his hand lifted in salute. The situation puzzled him.

"Sergeant Hamlin, how are you here? On leave?"

"Yes, sir."

"Of course this is rather unusual, Captain Barrett," said the lady hastily, tapping the astonished officer lightly with her fan, "but I was once quite well acquainted with Sergeant Hamlin when he was a major of the Fourth Texas infantry during the late war. He and my husband were intimates. Naturally I was delighted to meet him again."

The captain stared at the man's rigid figure.

"Good Lord, I never knew that, Hamlin," he exclaimed. "Glad to know it, my man. You see," he explained lamely, "we get all kinds of fellows in the ranks, and are not interested in their past history. I've had Hamlin under my command for two years now, and hanged if I knew anything about him, except that he was a good soldier. Were you ready to go, Mrs. Dupont?"

"Oh, yes; we have exhausted all our reminiscences. Goodby, Sergeant; so glad to have met you again."

She extended her ungloved hand, a single diamond glittering in the light. He accepted it silently, aware of the slight pressure of her fingers. Then the Captain assisted her through the window, and the falling curtain veiled them from view.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Another Message.

Hamlin sank back on the bench and leaned his head on his hand. Had anything been accomplished by this interview? One thing, at least—he had thoroughly demonstrated that the charm once exercised over his imagination by this beautiful woman had completely vanished. He saw her now as she was—heartless, selfish, using her spell of beauty for her own sordid ends. If there had been left a shred of romance in his memory of her, it was now completely shattered. Her coolness, her adroit changing of moods, convinced him she was playing a game. What game? Nothing in her words had revealed its nature, yet the man instinctively felt that it must involve Molly McDonald. Laboriously he reviewed, word by word, each sentence exchanged, striving to find some clew. He had pricked her in the Gaskins affair, there was no doubt of that; she knew, or at least suspected, the party firing the shot. She denied at first having been married to LeFevre, and yet later had been compelled to acknowledge that marriage. There then was a deliberate falsehood, which must have been told for a purpose. What purpose? Did she imagine it would make any difference with him, or did she seek to shield LeFevre from discovery? The latter reason appeared the more probable, for the man must have been in the neighborhood lately, else where did that haversack come from?

So engrossed was Hamlin with these thoughts that he hardly realized that some one had lifted the window curtain cautiously. The beam of light flashed across him, disappearing before he could lift his head to ascertain the cause. Then a voice spoke, and he leaned back to listen.

"Not there; gone back to the dance likely, while we were at the bar."

"Nobody out there?" this fellow growled his words.

"Some soldier asleep with his head on the rail; drunk, I reckon. Who was she with this time?"

"Barrett?"

"Who? Oh, yes, the fellow who brought in that troop of the Seventh. Lord, the old girl is getting her hooks into him early. Well, as long as Gaskins is laid up, she may as well amuse herself somewhere else. Barrett is rather a good looking, isn't he? Do you know anything about the man? Has he got any stuff?"

"Don't know," answered the gruff voice. "He's a West Pointer. Vera likes to amuse herself once in a while; that's the woman of it. Heard from Gaskins tonight?"

"Oh, he's all right," the man laughed. "That little prick frightened him though. Shut up like a clam."

"So I heard. He'll pay to keep the story quiet, all right. As soon as he is well enough to come down here, we'll tap his bundle. Swore he was

shot by a cavalry sergeant, didn't he?"

"And sticks to it like a mule. Must have it in for that fellow. Well, it helped our get-away."

"Yes, we're safe enough, unless Gaskins talks, and he's so in love with the McDonald girl he'll spill out his rather than have any scandal now. Wish I could get a word with Vera tonight; she ought to see him tomorrow—compassion, womanly sympathy, and all that rot, you know, helps the game. Let's drift over toward the Palace, Dan, and maybe I can give her the sign."

Hamlin caught a glimpse of their backs as they passed out—one in infantry fatigue, the other, a heavier built man, fairly well dressed in citizen's clothes. Inspired by a desire to see their features the Sergeant swung himself over the rail, and dropped lightly to the ground. In another moment he was out on the street, in front of the hotel, watching the open door. The two passed within a few feet of him, clearly revealed in the light streaming from the dance hall. The soldier lagged somewhat behind, an insignificant, rat-faced fellow, but the larger man walked straight, with squared shoulders. He wore a broad-brimmed hat pulled low over his eyes, and a black beard concealed the lower portion of his face. Hamlin followed as the two pushed their way up among the idle crowds congregated on the wooden steps, and peered in through the wide doorway. Satisfied that he would recognize both worthies when they met again, and



"Some Soldier Asleep, With His Head on the Rail."

realizing now something of the plot being operated, Hamlin edged in closer toward the sergeant who was guarding the entrance. The latter recognized him with a nod.

"Pretty busy, Masters?"

"Have been, but there will be a full now; when they come back from supper there'll be another rush likely. Would you mind taking my job a minute while I go outside?"

"Not in the least; take your time. Let me see what the tickets look like. That's all right—say, Masters, before you go, do you know that big duffer with a black beard in the front line?"

The other gave a quick glance down the faces.

"I've seen him before; dealt faro at the Poodle Dog a while; said to be a gun-man. Never heard his name. Oh, yes, come to think about it, they called him 'Red'—Confed soldier, I reckon. Ain't seen him before for a month. Got into some kind of a shootin' scrap up at Mike Kelly's and skipped out ahead of the marshal. Why?"

"Nothing particular—looks familiar, that's all. Who's the soldier behind him—the thin-faced runt?"

"Connors. Some river-rat the recruiting officers picked up in New York; in the guard-house most of the time; driver for Major McDonald when he happens to be sober enough."

"That is where I saw him then, driving the ladies. Knew I had seen that mug before."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Frenchman Works Short Time.

Recent investigations into the hours of work by officials of the French department of navigation have brought to light a record in government employment in the shape of an official whose daily "hours of duty" amount to exactly two minutes. This man dwells at a place on the Belgian frontier, and his arduous labors consist in fetching from one office a list of the number of barges that have entered French territory, the previous 24 hours and handing the said list in at another office. If the position be a sinecure, the pay is not high, the remuneration amounting to \$1.40 a month.

Improvement on Aeroplane.

Capt. W. I. Chambers' invention of a catapult device to launch hydro-aeroplanes from warships is characterized by Glenn H. Curtiss as "the most important achievement since wheels were put upon land machines." The device, only 30 feet long, enables the aeroplane to fly immediately after leaving the ship's deck.

"The checker left without explaining his official position, but I noticed about three hours afterward that the ship slowed down. I also saw that the Mongols, a sister ship on the same line, was passing us and also getting ready to stop. Well, they only gave me time to grab up my press book, that other shirt and an old pair of boxing gloves I was carrying, when they transferred me to the other ship."

"Going back? Say, did you ever holystone a deck?"

IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING WEEDS

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In this age of the conservation of natural resources much is being said, and justly so, regarding the conservation of the soil productivity. For, after all, the existence of the world's population depends entirely upon the products of the land. The main question, then, confronting us today, with the ever growing population, is, how shall we increase or at least maintain the productivity of the soil? That much of our land has been ill-managed and mistreated in the past and a great deal of plant food wasted is true in many cases.

One of the commonest examples of the wasting of plant food is found in allowing weeds to flourish in the same field with cultivated crops. The Canada thistle, cocklebur, red sorrel, fox-tail and other weeds draw upon the soil for nourishment just as corn, grain, clover and other cultivated crops do. If one-half of the stand in a clover meadow is red sorrel or white top, it means that practically one-half of the amount of plant food taken up during that season has been wasted. It makes no difference whether certain weeds come up early in the spring or late in the season after the corn is laid by, the cultivated crops suffer in every case. In a recent farmers' bulletin, published by the United States department of agriculture, it is stated, on the strength of several years' experiments conducted in several states, that in the cultivation of corn the keeping down of the weeds and not the stirring of the soil is the important factor.

Some farms have but a few noxious weeds. Their owners undoubtedly believe that "prevention is better than cure." This, of course, is the best practice. Everyone should avoid, so far as possible, the introduction of weeds by using clean seed, especially in the case of the forage crops, such as clover, alfalfa, timothy and other grasses.

Not a few weeds are reliable indicators of soil conditions. The common sedges, smartweeds and horse-tail, for example, tell the farmer that the soil in which they are growing is too wet and needs to be drained. The proper course to follow in such a case is not to waste time and energy in trying to eradicate these weeds by some special method, but to provide adequate drainage. This will enable the cultivated crops to thrive and gradually crowd the weeds out.

The red sorrel which is often found growing abundantly in the meadows also reveals an interesting story concerning the soil. The clover and alfalfa crops can not compete successfully with the red sorrel unless lime is present in the soil in sufficient quantities necessary for their proper development. The red sorrel will thrive, on the other hand, even on acid soils and its abundance in the meadow may usually be considered, therefore, as a sign of deficiency of the lime supply in the soil. Its presence may also indicate a lack of fertility, a soil too poor in humus and consequently subject to leaching, or other things of importance. Other cases of similar nature can be cited, but these will perhaps serve to illustrate the point.

If certain noxious weeds become established on the farm in spite of all precautions, then it devolves upon the farmer to do his best to get rid of them. In order to accomplish this task successfully there is an advantage in knowing such weeds and their habits and thus be prepared to use proper measures in their eradication. The value of such knowledge is plain. A farmer can not readily grow bumper crops unless he understands the requirements for their best development, and likewise it may be found difficult to eradicate certain harmful weeds unless he understands their nature.

The annual and biennial weeds must be treated differently from the perennial weeds. The annuals and the biennials, such as the cocklebur, prickly lettuce, wild carrot and mullein, for example, can usually be controlled by preventing the maturing of their seed; but in the case of the perennials, as the Canada thistle, bindweed, horse nettle, and yellow dock, the underground parts must either be destroyed or starved in order to stop new growth. The perennial weeds are commonly divided, with respect to their underground parts, into two groups. One group comprises those with true roots, the examples of which are buckhorn, yellow dock and ironweed; the other group includes all which have underground stems, as the Canada thistle, quack grass and the hedge bindweed, and also weeds with long horizontal roots, as the horse nettle, which behave in a similar way. The underground stems, also known as rootstocks, can be distinguished from the true roots by buds borne at short intervals. They have, as a rule, a great power of reproduction, and even though cut to pieces and dragged from their original place to another part of the field, each section is able to start a new growth. And this is what often happens. A field with a patch of Canada thistle or quack grass is plowed and harrowed, and the careless farmer, not knowing the character of these weeds, is likely to draw and scatter

pieces of their rootstocks over a large area and then find to his surprise that the dreaded weeds are rapidly spreading. It is quite important therefore to have some knowledge of such weeds and their characteristics in order that proper care may be exercised in dealing with them.

It has been stated that "prevention is better than cure," and it may be added that "to nip the evil in the bud" is the next best practice. A noxious weed destroyed before it has a chance to spread may save a great deal of trouble in the future. As an illustration: A farmer from the northern part of the state brought a weed to the Indiana experiment station for identification. It was the bracted plantain. He first noticed it several years ago as a clump of about half a dozen plants near the farmhouse. Within a period of about four or five years this weed had almost complete possession of seven acres of land. Had he known the bracted plantain and its nature and pulled it up when it first appeared he would have saved himself much extra labor, besides the loss sustained in the decreased yields from the infested fields. Such weeds as the Canada thistle, horse nettle, quack grass and others have sometimes been allowed to spread over large areas, simply because the farmers were not familiar with their characteristics.

Mr. W. S. Blatchley states in his "Indiana Weed Book" that of the fifty-five of the most aggressive weeds in Indiana, forty-one, or seventy-five per cent, are of foreign origin. It means that had the farmers in times past realized their harmful nature and fought these foreign intruders as soon as they appeared, the landowners of the present would not have to suffer so great losses caused annually by such weeds.

TRAINING THE COLLIE

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"Steady there! Whoa! Come easy!" To any one who has heard an experienced trainer of the Collie dog giving his commands, there are familiar phrases. Ever alert, active and graceful this noble animal responds quickly and with apparent ease to each and every one of its master's commands.

To the casual observer, it appears to be an easy task for the shepherd to guide and corral the band of unruly sheep with the aid of his dog. However, back of it all there lies a tale. It is an easy task now for the master and his trained dog to manage the flock, but the hours and days of toil, patience and stubborn persistence which the shepherd has spent in training his dog are factors worthy of consideration.

Taking the wee puppy the trainer makes it his first duty to gain the friendship and confidence of the little animal. This is done, of course, by kind and considerate treatment. Never once does the experienced Collie trainer permit himself to abuse his charge for the innocent yet sometimes destructive pranks which any normal, healthy puppy is sure to play.

When once the trainer and puppy are thoroughly familiar with each other, the first simple lessons begin. Heeling the trainer and responding to come and go commands constitute the first steps in the animal's education. Later as the puppy attains more size and activity, it is introduced to the farm animals with which it must associate the greater part of its life. Usually the trainer does not take his young dog among sheep or cattle until it is at least six months of age, chiefly because a puppy lacks considerably in activity and is likely to be injured by a charging ewe or an angry cow. Such an incident often instills fear into the young dog to such an extent that it is made useless for life.

When the dog has become familiar with the live stock, its education progresses chiefly through observation. Instinctively the Collie is an alert and observing animal. The thing it sees its master do, it emulates. It soon learns that when its master is driving a herd of sheep or a drove of cattle, that every member of the herd or drove must progress decently and in order. The animal inclined to stray or charge is reminded by the dog of its duty to remain with the band. Again, the dog learns chiefly through observation that when an animal or a drove of animals is brought near an open gate or door indicated by the master, that all animals are expected to enter regardless of their inclination to do otherwise. Taking advantage of the Collie's keen observation and ability to retain knowledge gained the trainer's patience and often repeated practices teaches his dog a code of signals and commands, which the carefully trained Collie obeys with almost human intelligence.

There is no doubt but that the well trained Collie is a great asset to any farm. It will save its master miles of steps. It will accomplish things in the handling of live stock which a half dozen men cannot do. Last, but not least, it makes a most amiable and enjoyable companion for its master's small children. Men of the farm, dispose of the worthless cur and replace it with a high-class Collie and train the latter properly. Then it is that you will have attained service and at the same time rid yourself of the predatory brutes which are ravaging the flocks of your vicinity.

TALKING SPOILED HIS TRIP

Passenger Beating His Way Was All Right Until He Himself Gave the Whole Snap Away.

Jack Grace, the veteran boxer and globe trotter, likes to tell stories about himself and retails one where in Honolulu proves to have offered him a welcome unaware.

"I had been stopping in Honolulu with the Jeffries-Johnson fight pictures and decided that I wanted to go

to Yokohama. I knew the chief engineer on the Manchuria, which was due in port in a couple of days, and I thought I would save \$200 fare by riding with him.

"When the ship came into port he told me that I could have the second engineer's cabin."

"Stay inside a couple of days and then come out and mix with the passengers. There are about 300 on board," he told me, "and I do not think you will have any trouble."

"I followed his instructions, and

after the second day I came out from hiding. We were within a few days of Japan, and I was regaling a bunch in the smoking room with some stories when a company checker looked at me closely and asked:

"Say, who are you?"

"I did not know him, so proceeded to tell of my experiences, and relate what a good friend I had in the chief engineer. Riding the rods is hard work," I told him, "and traveling first cabin on these transpacific liners is a pipe."

"The checker left without explaining his official position, but I noticed about three hours afterward that the ship slowed down. I also saw that the Mongols, a sister ship on the same line, was passing us and also getting ready to stop. Well, they only gave me time to grab up my press book, that other shirt and an old pair of boxing gloves I was carrying, when they transferred me to the other ship."

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