

MOLLY McDONALD

A TALE OF THE FRONTIER

By
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Border," "My Lady of
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South," etc., etc.
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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 threatened. Sergeant "Brick" Hamlin meets the stage in which Molly is traveling. They are attacked by Indians, and Hamlin helps Molly escape into the darkness. Hamlin tells Molly he was discharged from the Confederate service in disgrace and at the close of the war enlisted in the regular army. He suspects one Captain LeFevre, a traitor to the South, for his disappearance. Troops appear and under escort of Lieutenant 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 Major McDonald is promoted. Gaskins 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. He throws his hat over LeFevre's head. The governor, Dupont, and a soldier hatch up a money-making plot. Molly tells Hamlin her father seems to be in the power of Mrs. Dupont, who claims to be a daughter of McDonald's. Major McDonald is ordered to Fort Ripley. Hamlin finds McDonald's murdered body. He takes Wasson, a guide, and two troopers and goes in pursuit of the murderers, who had robbed the stage of \$80,000. He succeeds in capturing them. He succeeds in saving Connors, soldier accomplice of Dupont, from being hanged. Hamlin's party is caught in a fierce blizzard while heading for the Cimarron. One man dies from cold and another is shot. Wasson is shot when he comes in sight of Cimarron. Hamlin discovers a log cabin hidden under a bluff, occupied by Hughes, a cow thief, who is laying for LeFevre, who cheated him in a cattle deal. His description identifies LeFevre. He is captured and shot. Hughes shot Wasson mistaking him for one of LeFevre's party. Hamlin and Hughes take up the trail of LeFevre, who is carrying Molly to the Indians. They run into and waylay the fugitives. A fight ensues in which Hughes is shot by an Indian. Dying, he makes a desperate attempt to shoot LeFevre, but hits Hamlin, while the latter is disarming LeFevre. Hamlin is captured and shot. In the end Molly died. Molly tells Hamlin that her father was implicated in the plot to steal the paymaster's money. Hamlin confesses his love for Molly and finds that it is reciprocated.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Molly's Story.

The two rode steadily, following the trail left by Hamlin and Hughes earlier in the morning. As there had been no wind, and the cold had crusted the snow, the tracks left by the two ponies were easily followed. As they skirted the ridge the Indian pony herd could be distinguished, sufficiently close by this time to leave no doubt as to what they were. Hamlin cautiously kept back out of sight in the breaks of the ridge, although his keen eyes, searching the upper valley, discovered no sign of pursuit. Tired as Dupont's horse undoubtedly was, he might not yet have attained the Indian encampment, which, in truth, might be much farther away than Hughes had supposed. The fact that no spirals of smoke were visible puzzled the Sergeant, for in that frosty air they should naturally be perceived for a considerable distance. Possibly, however, the bluffs were higher and more abrupt, farther upstream, affording better chances of concealment. Indeed it was quite probable that the Indians would seek the most sheltered spot available for their winter camp, irrespective of any possible fear of attack. Reasonably safe from a winter campaign, the atrocities of the past summer would naturally tend to make them unusually cautious and watchful.

Molly, muffled to the eyes in her thick blanket, permitted her pony to follow the other without guidance, until they both dipped down into the hollow, safe from any possible observation. In some mysterious way the overpowering feeling of terror which had controlled her for days past had departed. The mere presence of Hamlin was an assurance of safety. As she watched him, erect in saddle, his blue overcoat tightly buttoned, his revolver belt strapped outside, she no longer felt any consciousness of the surrounding desolation or the nearness of savage foes. Her heart beat fast and her cheeks flushed in memory of what had so swiftly occurred between them. Without thought, or struggle, she gave herself unreservedly to his guidance, serenely confident in his power to succeed. He was a man so strong, so resourceful, so fitted to the environment, that her trust in him was unquestioned. She needed to ask nothing; was content to follow in silence. Even as she realized the completeness of her surrender, the Sergeant, relaxing none of his watchfulness, checked his pony so that they could ride onward side by side.

"We will follow the trail back," he explained, glancing aside at her face. "It is easier to follow than to strike out for ourselves across the open."

"Where does it lead?"

"To an old cow-camp on the Cimarron."

OBSERVE MONTH OF RAMIDAN

Period That Is Considered Most Holy by the Followers of the Prophet Mohammed.

It is the holy month of Ramidan in Constantinople. By reason of the declaration in the Koran "that the number of the months is twelve (lunar months), as it was ordained by Allah" in the course of thirty-three years Ramidan makes the entire circuit of the seasons. It was on the

15th of the holy month of Ramidan that the first chapter of the Koran was delivered to men. On that day the sultan goes to the "Chamber of the Sacred Mantle." This mantle was worn by the prophet and on this day it and other relics of the prophet are brought out to public view. Other relics are banners which once hung before the tent of his favorite wife Ayesha, and the prophet's beard, which is more potent in strength than the hair of Samson, and invigorates all who may touch it; a tooth which

to recall more clearly the exact facts. "The guests were already beginning to straggle back to the dance hall from supper, and I waited in the shadow of the building for an opportunity to slip into the hotel unobserved. While I hid there a cavalry soldier from the fort rode up, swung down from his saddle, and ran up the steps. I heard him ask for Major McDonald. Almost immediately he came out again and I passed him on the porch. Just inside the door I met my father. He was leaving the hotel with Dupont, and the latter swore savagely when I caught my father's arm, asking what message the orderly had brought. He answered strangely, saying he had received orders to go at once to Ripley on the stage; that he might be gone several days. There was nothing about all that to startle a soldier's daughter, but Dupont kept his hand on my father's arm, urging him to hurry. The actions of the man aroused my suspicions. I knew my father was acting paymaster, and I could perceive the outlines of a leather bag bulging beneath his overcoat. If this contained money, then I grasped Dupont's purpose. My plan of action occurred to me in a flash—I would accompany him until—until he was safely in the stage, and find opportunity to whisper warning. I remember asking him to wait a moment for me, and rushing to the cloak room after my coat. But when I returned they were gone. I ran out into the street, but they were not to be seen; they had not gone toward the stage office, for the lights revealed that distance clearly, and they had had no time in which to disappear within. With the one thought that Dupont had lured my father out of sight for purposes of robbery, I started to run down the little alley-way next the hotel. I know now how foolish I was, but then I was reckless. It was dark and I saw and heard nothing to warn me of danger. It was in my mind that my father had been lured on to the open prairie behind the hotel. Suddenly I was seized roughly, and a cloth whipped over my face before I could even scream. I heard a voice say: 'Damned if it ain't the girl! What will we do with her?' and then Dupont's voice answered gruffly: 'Hell, there ain't anything to do, but take the little hussy along. She'd queer the whole game, an' we've got an extra horse.' They jerked me forward so roughly, and I was so frightened that—that I must have fainted. At any rate I remembered nothing more distinctly until we had crossed the river, and I was on horseback wrapped in a blanket, and tied to the saddle. Some one was holding me erect; I could not move my arms, but could see and hear. It was dark, and we were moving slowly; there were two Indians ahead, and a white man riding each side of me. They thought me unconscious still, and spoke occasionally; little by little I recognized their voices and understood their words."

Her voice broke into a sob, but the Sergeant's eyes were still gazing vigilantly out over the snow-clad hills. "It is hard to tell the rest," she said finally, "but I learned that it was not robbery, but the betrayal of trust. My father was guilty, and yet at the same time a victim. I only got the truth in snatches, which I had to piece together, although later I learned other details. Mrs. Dupont had lied my father through some knowledge she had gained of his sister's family. I cannot even imagine what this could have been, but it was sufficient for her purpose. He gave her all he had, and then—then she heard of this government money being sent to Ripley. She had known about that for several days through the Lieutenant, and had ample time to arrange the plot. My father must have been crazy to have entered into the scheme, but he did, he did. The woman compelled him to it."

"I understand, Molly," broke in Hamlin, anxious to spare her the details. "They were to pretend robbery, but with the Major's connivance. An officer impersonating him, was despatched to Ripley by stage. This would prevent any immediate pursuit. Later the Major was to be released, to return to Dodge with his story. The projection of yourself into the affair disarranged the entire plot, and then quarrel occurred, and your father was killed."

"Yes; it was over what should be done with me; although I believe now they intended to kill him, so as to retain all the money. The older Indian fired the shot treacherously."

"And Connors?"

"Dupont killed him; they were both drunk, and the soldier fired first, but missed."

"And after that?"

She covered her face with her hands.

"It was all a dream of continuous horror, yet through it all, I do not recall consciousness of physical torture. I seemed to be mentally numb, my brain a blank. It was a realization of my father's guilt more than my own danger which affected me—that and his death. They were not unkind nor brutal. Indeed I do not clearly recall that I was ever spoken to, except when some necessary order was given. One night I heard them discuss what should be done with me; that I was to be hidden away in Black Kettle's



The Mere Presence of Hamlin Was an Assurance of Safety.

a few steps around the end of the hotel would bring me safely to the front entrance. The temptation to it was irresistible. I heard your voices within and thought I understood her game. It was dark below, yet I knew how close the earth was, and there was no sign of any one about. I clambered over the railing, let myself down as far as I could, and dropped. The slight fall did not even jar me, yet I was none too soon. As I crouched there in the darkness, she flung open the curtains, and looked out to the vacant balcony. I saw the flash of light, and heard her laugh—it was not pleasant laughter; for she was disappointed not to find me there. After the curtains fell again I could no longer hear your voices, and my sole desire was to get back into the hotel unobserved. I was not afraid, only I dreaded to meet any one who recognized me."

She paused in her recital, as though

Mohammed had knocked from his jaw when struck by a stone from a sling in battle, and a chunk of lime with a footprint in it made by the prophet when he sprang from it to the back of his magic steed, Al-Borak, "the lightning." It was upon this animal that Mohammed visited Jerusalem and the seven heavens from which he obtained important and exclusive information.

Better a tramp in the woods than one in the kitchen.

camp. Generally Dupont spoke to the Indians in their own tongue, but that night he thought me asleep. I—I had no hope left—not even faith that you could ever rescue me."

Hamlin's hand clasped hers firmly, but his eyes were riveted on something in the distance.

"Wait," he said, checking his horse, "what is that? See; down in the valley of the creek! Is it not a moving body of men?"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Advance of Custer.

The Sergeant swung down from the saddle and forced both ponies back below the crest of the hill, his swift glance sweeping back over the trail. Then he gazed again searchingly into the valley below.

"What is it?" she questioned.

"A moving column of horsemen, soldiers from their formation, for Indians never march in column of fours. They are too far away for me to be certain yet. What troops can be away out here?"

"Wasn't there to be a winter campaign against Black Kettle?" she questioned. "It was the rumor at Dodge. Perhaps—"

"Why, yes, that must be it," he interrupted eagerly. "Custer and the Seventh. What luck! And I'll be in it with the boys after all."

"Shall we not ride to meet them?"

"Soon, yes; only we need to be certain first."

"Are you not?" and she rose in her stirrups. "I am sure they are cavalry.

"Never Will I Doubt Again."

men. Now you can see clearly as they climb the hill."

"There is no doubt," he admitted.

"A single troop ahead of the main body; the others will be beyond the bend in the stream."

He stepped back, where he could look directly into her face.

"They are soldiers all right, but that was not what I wanted to be so certain about. When we ride down there, Molly girl, we shall be swallowed up into the old life once more, the old army life."

"Yes."

"Perhaps you do not realize how different it will all be from out here alone together."

"Why should it be different?"

"I shall be again a soldier in the ranks, under orders, and you Major McDonald's daughter."

"But—but—" her eyes full of appeal.

"No, little girl," he explained quickly, reaching up and touching her gently; "we are never going to say anything about that to those down there—his comrades in arms. It is going to be our secret. I am glad you told me; it has brought us together, as, perhaps, nothing else could, but there is no reason why the world should ever know. Let them think he died defending his trust. Perhaps he did; what you overheard might have been said for a purpose, but, even if it were true, he had been driven to it by a merciless woman. It is ours to defend, not blacken his memory."

She bent slowly down until her cheek touched his.

"I—I thought you would say that," she returned slowly, "but what else you said is not so—there will never again be a barrier of rank between us."

She straightened in the saddle, looking down into his eyes.

"Whoever the officer may be in command of that detachment, I want you to tell him all."

"All?"

"Yes, that we are engaged; I am proud to have them know."

The truth was shining in her eyes, glowing on her cheeks. She leaned forward.

"Kiss me, and believe!"

"Molly, Molly," he whispered, "Never will I doubt again."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

DIVIDED INTERESTS.

"Do you think only of me?" murmured the bride. "Tell me that you think only of me."

"It's this way," explained the groom, gently. "Now and then I have to think of the furnace, my dear."

FREE COUNTRY.

This is such a free country that

"Yes, teacher, very much. I liked the sea, but I couldn't find the inhemis."

"The what, James Henry William?"

"The inhemis, teacher; where it says in the Bible, 'The sea and all that in them is.'"

NATURAL AFFINITY.

"What do you think of the timbre of Mlle. Squallini's voice?"

"I think it is the sought of timber that ought to take to the woods."

IN GREEN AND WHITE

APPROPRIATE TOUCH FOR BRIDE AND BRIDESMAIDS.

Color Scheme May Easily Be Carried Out With the Exercise of a Little Thought—Clever Idea for a Centerpiece.

In preparing the table, fit the top with a covering of delicate green satin with an eighteen-inch fall of lace from the edge of the table, finishing on the edge of the table with a close, narrow wreath of fern leaves, using a large lace centerpiece, plate and glass doilies to match. Use the green and white china, and for place cards painted green and white butterflies poised on the rims of the water glasses. For a floral centerpiece use a gilt Louis XVI basket filled with white lilies, which form a fringe about the edge, and white narcissus; on the handle tie a large feather bow of silk illusion.

In the lace-edged serviettes tuck the luncheon roll, and in tiny gilt baskets like the center one put the salted almonds. In tiny gold and white band boxes put the bonbons of green and white and tie the cover on with white satin ties. A pair of small white satin slippers with lace paper inserts hold the crystallized mint leaves at either end of the table; the relishes all find place in the cut glass relish dish.

Above the table swings a wedding bell made of white lilies, the floral clapper of white narcissus, and the bell rope of smilax stretches to the bride's place at table, where with a gentle pull she may release the bell, which is a shower bouquet that separates into a bunch of flowers for each girl guest.

The menu should follow the color scheme of green and white as far as possible, in the way of coloring the jellies, cakes, ices, bonbons, salads, and sauces, and if a fruit cup is served through the meal, it may have the green cherries and the mint leaves in it by way of garnish coloring.

A decorative salad is made of white grapes and the green cherries, halved and stoned, with chopped olives and white celery. Use heavy mayonnaise, colored a delicate green, and serve the salad in green pepper shells on white lettuce leaves. The pistachio cream is attractive served in the candy white lilies surrounded by their green leaves, and the small heart-shaped silver cakes with green frosting may be served with the cream.

OF BAMBOO AND FILET LACE

Attractive Muffin Stands Worthy to Set Beside the Daintiest of Tea Tables.

Daintily fragile looking yet perfectly reliable are the new muffin stands of bamboo and filet lace. The three legs which extend upward form a frame of such extreme slenderness that it seems too ethereal for ordinary use. Nevertheless it is stout enough to support four shelves of graduated size made of tightly drawn and closely woven linen cords covered with mats of embroidered filet net edged with filet lace. These mats, being three-cornered, and tied to the legs of the stand by narrow white ribbons, are readily detached and cleaned. And although the network of cording under them looks delicate, it is strong enough to support a china plate piled high with tea cakes. The stand has the usual high-arched handle also of bamboo, and the whole affair is the lightest thing of its kind. Moreover, it is not difficult to make as any carpenter can cut the bamboo sticks so that they will stand evenly and firmly while fingers deft enough to embroider filet mats should be able to weave and adjust the cording shelves.

DAINTY LACE.

Striking in its beautiful simplicity is a Paquin gown, made of plain, dull blue mouseline de soie. The full tunic drops a slender pointed train, and the edges of it are bound with satin of a darker shade; into the folded belt of the darker blue is thrust a rose of coral pink silk. The wrap designed especially to be worn with this gown is made of blue crepe de chine, heavily embroidered in dull Persian colors. The wide double ruffles that trim it are of the material of the gown, says Harper's Bazaar.

A white louison silk dress has a hem and little jacket of coarsely woven cotton, printed in colors. A green silk collar and scarf add a brilliant bit of color. Taffeta silks in changing invisible checks in light colors are made into novel wraps and loose long coats for evening wear, and long and short lace coats are worn with gowns to match, or as separated garments. All afloat with ruffles and ribbon ends, they are lined with one thickness of mousseline de soie.

MEND SILK WITH RAVELINGS.

Silk dresses that are so apt to get three-cornered tears are best mended with their own ravelings, as thread is differently twisted. Carefully ravel out threads long enough to sew