

MOLLY McDONALD

A TALE OF THE FRONTIER

By RANDALL PARRISH
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Illustrations by V. L. Barnes

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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. "Bric" Hamlin, sergeant who has just arrived with messages to McDonald, volunteers for the mission. Molly starts at Fort Dodge two days ahead of schedule. She decides to push on to Fort Dodge by stage in company with "Bric" Hamlin. Hamlin, 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 repulsed by attacks on the stage. Moylan and Gonzales are killed. Hamlin and Molly plan to escape in the darkness by way of a gully. Molly is wounded and Hamlin carries her. They cross a river and go into hiding. The Indians discover their escape and start pursuit, but go in the wrong direction. Hamlin is much excited at finding a haversack marked C. S. A. He explains to Molly that he was in a 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. Leathers, who he suspects of being responsible for his disgrace and for whom he has been hunting ever since. He appears on the scene. Under escort of Lieut. Gaskins Molly returns to join her father. Hamlin leaves to rejoin his regiment. Hamlin returns to Fort Dodge after a summer of fighting Indians, and finds Molly there. Shots are heard in the night accompanied by the call of the sentry. Hamlin rushes out, sees what he believes is the haversack lying in the darkness and falls over the body of Lieutenant Gaskins, who has been wounded. The officer accuses Hamlin of shooting him and the sergeant is arrested.

CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

Voices reached him from outside, echoing in through the high, iron-barred window, but they were distant, the words indistinguishable. As his brain cleared he gave no further thought to his own predicament, only considering how he could best divert suspicion from her. It was all a confused maze, into the mystery of which he was unable to penetrate. That it was Molly McDonald shrinking there in the dark corner of the barracks wall he had no doubt. She might not have recognized him, or imagined that he saw her, but that spear of light had certainly revealed a face not to be mistaken. White as it was, haggard with terror, half concealed by straggling hair, the identification was nevertheless complete. The very pitifulness of expression appealed to him. She was not a girl easily frightened; no mere promiscuous shooting, however startling, would have brought that look to her face. He had seen her in danger before, had tested her coolness under fire. This meant something altogether different. What? Could it be that Gaskins had wronged the girl, had insulted her, and that she, in response, had shot him down? In the darkness of conjecture there seemed no other adequate explanation. The two were intimates; the rumor of an engagement was already circulating about the garrison. And the stricken man had endeavored to shift the blame on him. Hamlin could not believe this was done through any desire to injure; the Lieutenant had no cause for personal dislike which would account for such an accusation. They had only met once, and then briefly. There was no rivalry between them, no animosity. To be sure, Gaskins had been domineering, threatening to report a small breach of discipline, but in this his words and actions had been no more offensive than was common among young officers of his quality. The Sergeant had passed all memory of that long ago. It never occurred to him now as of the slightest importance. Far more probable did it appear that Gaskins' only motive was to shield the girl from possible suspicion. When he had realized that Hamlin was a prisoner, that for some reason he had been seized for the crime, he had grasped the opportunity to point him out as the assassin, and thus delay pursuit. The chances were the wounded man did not even recognize who the victim was—he had blindly grasped at the first straw.

But suppose he had been mistaken? Suppose that woman hiding there was some one else? Suppose he had imagined a resemblance in that sudden flash of revelation? What then? Would she care enough to come to him when she learned of the arrest? He laughed at the thought, yet it was a bitter laugh, for it brought back a new realization of the chasm between them. Major McDonald's daughter interesting herself in a guard-house prisoner! More than likely she would promptly forget that she had ever before heard his name.

He got up and paced the cell, noting as he did so how closely he was watched by the guard.

"Have you heard long and badly the Lieutenant was hurt?" he asked, approaching the door.

The sentry glanced down the corridor. "He'll pull out, all right," he replied confidentially, his lips close to the door. "Nothin' vital punctured. You better go to bed, an' forget it till mornin'."

"All right, pardner," and Hamlin returned to the cot. "Turn the light down a little, will you? There, that's better. My conscience won't trouble me, but that glare did."

With his face to the stone wall he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XV.

An Old Acquaintance.

It was late in the forenoon when the heavily armed guard marched Hamlin across to the commandant's office. He had been surprised at the delay, but had enjoyed ample opportunity to plan a course of action, and decide how best to meet the questions which would be asked. He could clear himself without involving her, without even a mention of her presence, and this knowledge left him confident and at ease.

There were half a dozen officers gathered in the small room, the gray-bearded Colonel in command, sitting behind a table, with Major McDonald at his right, and the others wherever they could find standing room.

"Sergeant," the Colonel said rather brusquely, "you came in last night with 'M' troop, did you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Had you ever met Lieutenant Gaskins before?"

"Once, he pulled me out of a bad scrape with a bunch of Indians out on the trail a few months ago."

"The same affair I spoke to you about," commented McDonald quietly. "The attack on the stage."

The Colonel nodded, without removing his eyes from the Sergeant's face.

"Yes, I know about that," he said. "And that was the only occasion of your meeting?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Sergeant Hamlin, I purpose being perfectly frank with you. There are two or three matters not easily explained about this affair. I am satisfied of your innocence; that you were not directly concerned in the shooting of Lieutenant Gaskins. Men of your troop state that you were in barracks when the shots were fired, and the wound was not made by a service revolver, but by a much smaller weapon. Yet there are circumstances which puzzle you, but which, no doubt, you can explain. Two shots had been fired from your revolver."

"You Better Go to Bed an' Forget it Till Mornin'!"

and he pushed the weapon across the table.

"I rode ahead of the troop in march yesterday," Hamlin explained, "and fired twice at a jack-rabbit. I must have neglected to replace the cartridges. Private Stone was with me."

"Why did you submit to arrest so easily, without any attempt to clear yourself?"

The Sergeant's gray eyes smiled, but his response was quietly respectful.

"I was condemned before I really knew what had occurred, sir. The sentry, the Sergeant of the guard, and the Lieutenant all insisted that I

was guilty. They permitted me no opportunity to explain. I thought it just as well to remain quiet, and let the affair straighten itself out."

"Yet your action threw us completely off the trail," broke in McDonald impatiently. "It permitted the really guilty parties to escape. Did you see any one?"

"Black smudges merely, Major, apparently running toward the ravine. My eyes were blinded, leaping from a lighted room."

Hamlin leaned forward eagerly, one hand tapping the table.

"Was one of them a woman?" he questioned sharply.

Hamlin's heart leaped into his throat, but he held himself motionless.

"They were indistinguishable, sir; mere shadows. Have you reason to suspect there may have been a woman involved?"

The Major leaned back in his chair, but the commandant, after a glance at his officer, answered:

"The pistol used was a small one, such as a woman might carry, and there are marks of a woman's shoe plainly visible at the edge of the ravine. Lieutenant Gaskins was alone when he left the officers' club five minutes before the firing began. You are sure you have never had any controversy with this officer?"

"Perfectly sure, sir. We have never met except on the one occasion already referred to, and then scarcely a dozen words were exchanged."

"How then, Sergeant," and the Colonel spoke very soberly, "do you account for his denouncing you as his assassin?"

"I presumed he was influenced by my arrest, sir; that the shock had affected his brain."

"That supposition will hardly answer. The Lieutenant is not severely wounded, and this morning appears to be perfectly rational. Yet he insists you committed the assault; even refers to you by name."

The accused man pressed one hand to his forehead in bewilderment.

"He still insists I shot him?"

"Yes; to be frank, he's rather bitter about it, and no facts we have brought to bear have any apparent weight. He swears he recognized your face in the flare of the first discharge."

The Sergeant stood silent, motionless, his gaze on the Colonel's face.

"I do not know what to say, sir," he answered finally. "I was not there, and you all know it from the men of my troop. There has been no trouble between Lieutenant Gaskins and myself, and I can conceive of no reason why he should desire to involve me in this affair—unless," he paused doubtfully, "unless, sir, he really knows who shot him, and is anxious to shift the blame elsewhere to divert suspicion."

"You mean he may be seeking to shield the real culprit?"

"That is the only explanation that occurs to me, sir."

The Colonel stroked his beard nervously, his glance wandering to the faces of the other officers.

"That might be possible," he acknowledged regretfully, "although I should dislike to believe any officer of my command would be deliberately guilty of so despicable an act. However, all we can do now is endeavor to uncover the truth. You are discharged from arrest, Sergeant Hamlin, and will return to your troop."

Hamlin passed out the door into the sunshine, dimly conscious that his guarded answers had not been entirely satisfactory to those left behind. Yet he had said all he could say, all he dared say. More and more firmly there had been implanted in his mind a belief that Molly McDonald was somehow involved in this unfortunate affair, and that her name must be protected at all hazard. This theory alone would seem to account for Gaskins' efforts to turn suspicion, and when this was connected with the already known presence of a woman on the scene, and the smallness of the weapon used, the evidence seemed conclusive.

As far as his own duty was concerned, the Sergeant felt no doubt. Whatever might be the cause, there was no question in his mind but that she was fully justified in her action. Disliking the Lieutenant from the first, and as strongly attracted by the girl, his sympathies were now entirely with her. If she had shot him, then it was for some insult, some outrage, and he was ready to protect her with his life. He stopped, glancing back at the closed door, tempted to return and ask permission to interview Gaskins personally. Then the uselessness of such a procedure occurred to him; the fact that nothing could result from their meeting but disappointment and recrimination. The man evidently disliked him, and would resent any interference; he had something to conceal, something at stake for which he would battle strenuously. It would be better to let him alone at present, and try to uncover a clue elsewhere. Later, with more facts in his possession, he could face the Lieutenant and compel his acknowledgment. These considerations caused him to turn sharply and walk straight toward the ravine. Yet his investigations there brought few results. On the upper bank were the marks of a woman's shoe, a slender footprint

clearly defined, but the lower portion of the ravine was rocky, and the trail soon lost. He passed down beyond the stables, realizing how easily the fugitives, under cover of darkness, could have escaped. The stable guard could have seen nothing from his station, and just below was the hard-packed road leading to the river and the straggling town. There was nothing to trace, and Hamlin climbed back up the bluff completely baffled but desperately resolved to unlock the mystery. The harder the solution appeared, the more determined he became to solve it. As he came out, opposite the barrack entrance, a carriage drove in past the guard-house, the guard presenting arms, and circled the parade in the direction of officers' row. It contained a soldier driver and two ladies, and the Sergeant's face flushed under its tan as he recognized Miss McDonald. Would she notice him—speak to him? The man could not forbear lifting his eyes to her face as the carriage swept by. He saw her glance toward him, smile, with a little gesture of recognition, and stood there bareheaded, his heart throbbing wildly. With that look, that smile, he instantly realized two facts of importance—she was willing to meet him on terms of friendship, and she had not recognized him the evening previous as he ran past her in the dark.

Hamlin, his thoughts entirely centered upon Miss McDonald, had scarcely



"I Do Not Know What to Say, Sir," he Answered Finally.

ly noted her companion, yet as he lingered while the carriage drew up before the Major's quarters, he seemed to remember vaguely that she was a strikingly beautiful blonde, with face shadowed by a broad hat. Although larger, and with light fluffy hair and blue eyes, the lady's features were strangely like those of her slightly younger companion. The memory of these grew clearer before the Sergeant—the whiteness of the face, the sudden lowering of the head; then he knew her; across the chasm of years her identity smote him as a blow; his breath came quickly and his fingers clenched.

"My God!" he muttered, unconsciously. "That was Vera! She has changed, wonderfully changed, but—she knew me. What, in Heaven's name, can she be doing here, and— with Molly?"

With straining eyes he stared after them until they both disappeared together within the house. Miss McDonald glanced back toward him once almost shyly, but the other never turned her head. The carriage drove away toward the stables. Feeling as though he had looked upon a ghost, Hamlin turned to enter the barracks. An infantry soldier leaned negligently in the doorway smoking.

"You're the sergeant who saved that girl down the trail, ain't yer?" he asked indolently. "Thought so; I was one o' Gaskins' men."

Hamlin accepted the hand thrust forth, but with mind elsewhere.

"Do you happen to know who that was with Miss McDonald?" he asked.

"Didn't see 'em, only their backs as they went in—nice lookin' blonde."

"Yes; rather tall, with very light hair."

"Oh, that's Mrs. Dupont."

"Mrs. Dupont?" the name evidently a surprise; "wife of one of the officers?"

"No, she's no army dame. Husband's a cattleman. Got a range on the Cowskin, south o' here, but I reckon the missus don't like that sort of thing. Lives in St. Louis mostly, but has been stoppin' with the McDonalds for a month or two now. Heerd she was a niece o' the Major's, an' reckon she must be, er thar'd be in flare up long ago. She's a high flyer, she is, an' she's got the Lieutenant goin' all right."

"Gaskins?"

"Sure; he's a lady-killer, but that's 'bout all the kind o' killer he is, fer as I ever noticed—one o' yer be-fitters. Thar ain't hardly an officer in this garrison that ain't just achin' fer her kick that squirt, but their women—oh, Lord; they think he's a little tin god on wheels. Beats hell, don't it, what money will do fer a damn fool!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

IDEAS for HOME BUILDERS

By WM. A. RADFORD

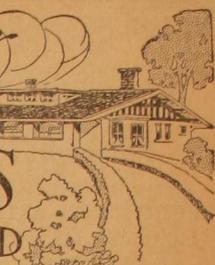
Mr. William A. Radford will answer questions and give advice FREE OF COST on all subjects pertaining to the subject of building, for the readers of this paper. On account of his wide experience as Editor, Author and Manufacturer, he is, without doubt, the highest authority on all these subjects. Address all inquiries to William A. Radford, No. 173 West Jackson, or toward Chicago, Ill., and only enclose two-cent stamp for reply.

For a corner lot or an extra wide lot I like a square house with a four-sided roof. This style of roof has been popular for cottage houses for a great many years. In fact, it used to be known in the east as a "cottage" roof, because in New York and other eastern states square-built one-story houses were very common. Some of these cottage houses were so large that the roof needed all the support possible, and the pointed peak style in the design here illustrated was found especially suitable.

It looked well then, and it looks well now; but we make these roofs much steeper and add a few windows, which enables us to get the benefit of a good gable that in the old-style roof was too dark. Sometimes we tuck several bedrooms away in the corners of these pyramid roofs; but when we do that, we generally run the wall up a foot or two higher and extend the windows down considerably lower than these.

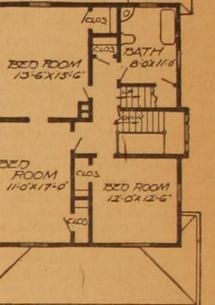
As this house is built the attic is all right for storage purposes and for hanging the family washing on rainy or snowy days; and it is worth a great deal of comfort, during the summer, just to keep the house cool when the sun shines hot and the wind comes right out of a furnace somewhere down in the southwest.

To appreciate a good attic at its full value, you must have the window sash hung with strong hinges. Butts are all right generally; but sometimes strap hinges are better; they are surely better if you have the sash made with wide enough stiles to hold the screws properly. You must have some good way of fastening the windows open, or part way open, so that they will stay "put" in all kinds of weather. You do not want to climb the upper stair during a storm when the lightning is blinking at you, to shut and fasten an obstreperous sash so that it will not wigwag the glass all out



lived up to, it is a direct benefit to each owner while he occupies his house; and it helps to rent or sell his property when, in the progress of human events, that becomes necessary. But the best-laid plans of real estate men sometimes come to grief, and this mild, utopian scheme is not immune from such troubles. Unfortunately, in these cases, it has been decreed that a warranty deed shall convey complete possession to said tract or parcel of land, even up to and including the last half-inch as laid down upon a certain map in the office of the county clerk; and it seems that no additional agreement can go behind the returns.

When a man obtains possession of a lot he can erect a perpendicular wall



Second Floor Plan.

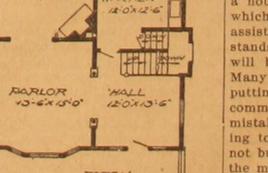
right out to the street line, and he can extend that wall as far heavenward as his bank account will permit, and he can go down the other way if he be so inclined. Anyone can break the agreement, if he wants to be so devilish mean, by transferring his title to some other member of the family or by some other snide trick; but you still have the privilege, on the authority of Judge Lynch, to tar and feather the white-livered scoundrel.

In building a house like this it is better to get a lot 50 feet wide if you



of it. Such little excursions, when taken in the middle of the night, lead to more things than the attic; they have been known to lead to profanity, and that is wrong.

Being practically 20 feet wide, this house needs a 40-foot lot if it is on a corner; and the lot should be wider than this if there is a house on each side of it. Sometimes there are building restrictions which require all houses on certain streets to be placed so many feet back from the curb or the street line; and such stipulations



First Floor Plan.

usually include the position of the house in regard to the side line of the lot. The intention is to present an even frontage, for uniformity in front, and to leave a decent lawn on the sunny side of the house, one object being to let the light into the next man's windows across this open space, and the second man's lawn helps to light the third man's house; and so on along the whole length of the street.

Among honorable men such an arrangement works very well. When

can. That leaves room for a nice lawn, together with suitable outside decorations, without giving the property a crowded, built-in effect. The final finishing up of the grounds and general surroundings of the house has not received as much attention at the hands of builders as it should. Ordinarily architects and builders are satisfied to design a good house, and see that it is properly built, while leaving the surroundings and final embellishments entirely with the owner.

Now, the fact is, houses are built for the most part, by men who have spent the early years of their lives in business; and their attention has been taken up with matters entirely different, and they are not qualified to arrange the many details that properly go with a well-arranged home. They may know what they want in a general way; but when it comes to fitting a house to a lot in a community in which they would like to live, a little assistance from a man who understands such things is a great help, and will be appreciated in after years. Many mistakes have been made by putting unsuitable houses in certain communities; and a great many more mistakes have been made in neglecting to fit the house to the lot, or in not buying a lot to fit the house that the man wants to build.

One of the commonest mistakes in building is to place the house the wrong way. There are house plans that are perfectly satisfactory when fronted south, which would badly fit a northern outlook. The direction in which a house fronts means a good deal to some people, which others care very little about it. North, south, east and west—all have advantages, and they all have disadvantages. It very much depends on the likes and dislikes of the inmates, but a great deal also depends on the plan of the house.

Honors Which Escape Publicity. One of the joys of commencement is wearing a borrowed dress suit and having the waiter spill soup over it.

BULLETS DID LITTLE DAMAGE

Aviator's Machine Hit Frequently, but Efficiency Was Not Impaired at Any Time.

The Balkan campaign has proved valuable to the science of aviation. It has shown by one concrete example that the mere fact of being struck by bullets and perforated does not signify irretrievable disaster for the airship. The Russian aviator, Blinoff, was engaged by Bulgaria to fly to Ad-

rianople and throw down handbills in the Turkish language, in which the Bulgarians called on the population of Adrianople to surrender. He was given only an old apparatus, but he threw down the bills. "At Fort Karagach I saw a considerable number of infantrymen shooting towards the sky with their rifles," he said. "I did not hear the shots, but when I noticed that four bullets had struck my apparatus I means, I did not lose my presence of mind, but flew on. When the guns in

the forts fired shrapnel at me and when the apparatus had been struck several times by fragments of projectiles the situation became critical. Fortunately only the wings were hit and not the motor, and so I could keep on and in twenty minutes I was once more in the flying field at Mustafa Pasha. The apparatus was repaired and used again."

Wood That Chopped Location. An extraordinary incident of a moving forest was reported to the Llan-

daff and Dinas Powis (Wales) rural district council. The gentleman who called attention to the matter, said the wood was situated near Llanvithyn. It was about four hundred yards long, and consisted of large elm trees. It had left its moorings on a steep slope and was moving bodily towards the roadway. A cut had been left at the top which was full of water. The wood had been moving for eight or nine days. Trees were leaning in all directions, and some were coming bodily down.