

The Devil's Own

A Romance of the Black Hawk War

By RANDALL FARRISH

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"YOU DIRTY, LOW-DOWN THIEF!"

Synopsis.—In 1832 Lieutenant Knox of the regular army is on duty at Fort Armstrong, Rock Island, Ill., in territory threatened by disaffected Indians. The commandant sends him with dispatches to St. Louis. He takes passage on the steamer Warrior and makes the acquaintance of Judge Beaucaire, rich planter, and of Joe Kirby (the Devil's Own), notorious gambler. Knox learns Judge Beaucaire has a daughter, Eloise. He also learns strange things about the Beaucaire family.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

"You mean—"
"In the form of a child, born to a quadroon girl named Della. The mother, it seems, was able in some way to convince the judge of the child's parentage. All this happened shortly before Beaucaire's second marriage, and previous to the time when Haines came to the Landing. Exactly what occurred is not clear, or what explanation was made to the bride. The affair must have cut Beaucaire's pride deeply, but he had to face the conditions. It ended in his making the girl Della his housekeeper, while her child—the offspring of Adelbert Beaucaire—was brought up as a daughter. A year or so later the second wife gave birth to a female child, and those two girls have grown up together exactly as though they were sisters. Haines insists that neither of them knows to this day otherwise."

"But that would be simply impossible," I insisted. "The mother would never permit."

"The mother! Which mother? The slave mother could gain nothing by confession, and the judge's wife died when her baby was less than two years old. Della practically mothered the both of them, and is still in complete charge of the house."

"You met her?"
"She was pointed out to me—a gray-haired, dignified woman, so nearly white as scarcely to be suspected of negro blood."

"Yet still a slave?"
"I cannot answer that. Haines himself did not know. If manumission papers had ever been executed it was done early, before he took charge of Beaucaire's legal affairs. The matter never came to his attention."

"But, captain," I exclaimed, "do you realize what this might mean? If Judge Beaucaire has not issued papers of freedom this woman Della is still a slave."

"Certainly."
"And under the law her child was born into slavery?"

"No doubt of that."
"But the unspeakable horror of it—this young woman brought up as free, educated and refined, suddenly to discover herself to be a negro under the law, and a slave. Why, suppose Beaucaire should die, or lose his property suddenly; she could be sold to the cotton fields, into bondage to anyone who would pay the price for her."

"There is nothing on record. Haines assured himself as to that some years ago."

"What are the two girls named?"
"Rene and Eloise."

"Which one is the daughter?"
"Really, lieutenant, I do not know. You see I was never introduced, but merely gained a glimpse of them in the garden. I doubt if I would recognize the one from the other now. You see all this story was told me later."

I sat there a long while, after he had gone below, the tactful mate at the wheel. Totally unknown to me as these two mysterious girls were, their strange story fascinated my imagination. What possible tragedy lay before them in the years? What horrible revelation to wrench them asunder—to change in a single instant the quiet current of their lives? In spite of every effort, every lurking hope, some way I could not rid myself of the thought that Beaucaire—either



"There, You Bloodsucker!" he Cried Insolently.

through sheer neglect, or some instinct of bitter hatred—had failed to meet the requirements of his duty. Even as I sat there, struggling vainly against this suspicion, the judge himself came forth upon the lower deck and began pacing back and forth restlessly beside the rail. It was a struggle for me not to join him; the impetuosity of youth urging me even to brave his anger in my eagerness to ascertain the whole truth. Yet I possessed some

enough, or discretion, to refrain, realizing dimly that, not even in the remotest degree, had I any excuse for such action. This was no affair of mine. Nor, indeed, would I have found much opportunity for private conversation, for only a moment or two later Kirby joined him, and the two remained together, talking earnestly, until the gong called us all to supper. Across the long table, bare of cloth, the coarse food served in pewter dishes, I was struck by the drawn, ghastly look in Beaucaire's face. He had aged perceptibly in the last few hours, and during the meal scarcely exchanged a word with anyone, eating silently, his eyes downcast. Kirby, however, was the life of the company, and the miners roared at his humorous stories and anecdotes of adventure—while outside it grew dark, and the little Warrior struggled cautiously through the waters, seeking the channel in the gloom.

CHAPTER III.

The End of the Game.

It must have been nearly midnight before I finally decided to seek a few hours' rest below, descending the short ladder and walking forward along the open deck for one last glance ahead. Some time the next day we were to be in St. Louis, and this expectation served to brighten my thoughts. I turned back along the deserted deck, only pausing a moment to glance carelessly in through the front windows of the main cabin. The forward portion was wrapped in darkness, and unoccupied, but beyond, toward the rear of the long saloon, a considerable group of men were gathered closely about a small table, above which a swinging lamp burned brightly, the rays of light illuminating the various faces. Gambling was no novelty on the great river in those days, gambling for high stakes, and surely no ordinary game, involving a small sum, would ever arouse the depth of interest displayed by these men. Some instinct told me that the chief players would be Kirby and Beaucaire, and with quickening pulse I opened the cabin door and entered.

No one noted my approach, or so much as glanced up, the attention of the crowd riveted upon the players. There were four holding cards—the judge, Kirby, Carver and McAfee; but I judged at a glance that the latter two were merely in the game as a pretense, the betting having already gone far beyond the limit of their resources. Without a thought as to the cards they held my eyes sought the faces of the two chief players, and then visioned the stakes displayed on the table before them. McAfee and Carver were clearly enough out of it, their cards still gripped in their fingers, as they leaned breathlessly forward to observe more closely the play. The judge sat upright, his attitude strained, staring down at his hand, his face white and eyes burning feverishly. That he had been drinking heavily was evident, but Kirby fronted him in apparent cold indifference, his feelings completely masked, with the cards he held bunched in his hands and entirely concealed from view. Between the two rested a stack of gold coin, a roll of crushed bills and a legal paper of some kind, the exact nature of which I could not determine. It was evident that a fortune already rested on that table, awaiting the flip of a card. The silence, the breathless attention, convinced me that the crisis had been reached—it was the judge's move; he must cover the last bet or throw down his hand a loser.

Perspiration beaded his forehead, and he crunched the cards savagely in his hands. His glance swept past the crowd as though he saw nothing of their faces.
"Another drink, Sam," he called, the voice trembling. He tossed down the glass of liquor as though it were so much water, but made no other effort to speak. You could hear the strained breathing of the men.
"Well," said Kirby sneeringly, his cold gaze surveying his motionless opponent. "You seem to be taking your time. Do you cover my bet?"

Someone laughed nervously, and a voice sang out over my shoulder, "You might as well go the whole hog, judge. The niggers won't be no good without the land ter work 'em on. Fling 'em into the pot—they're as good as money."

Beaucaire looked up, red-eyed, into the impassive countenance opposite. His lips twitched yet managed to make words issue between them.
"How about that, Kirby?" he asked hoarsely. "Will you accept a bill of sale?"

Kirby grinned, shuffling his hand carelessly.
"Why not? 'Twon't be the first time

I've played for niggers. They are worth so much gold down the river. What have you got?"
"I can't tell offhand," sullenly. "About twenty field hands."
"And house servants?"
"Three or four."

The gambler's lips set more tightly, a dull gleam creeping into his eyes.
"See here, Beaucaire," he hissed sharply. "This is my game, and I play square and never squeal. I know about what you've got, for I've looked them over; thought we might get down to this sometime. I can make a pretty fair guess as to what your niggers are worth. That's why I just raised you ten thousand and put up the money. Now if you think this is bluff, call me."

"What do you mean?"
"That I will accept your niggers as covering my bet."
"The field hands?"
"Kirby smiled broadly.
"The whole bunch—field hands and house servants. Most of them are old; I doubt if altogether they will bring that amount, but I'll take the risk. Throw in a blanket bill of sale, and we'll turn up our cards. If you won't do that the pile is mine as it stands."

Beaucaire again wet his lips, staring at the uncovered cards in his hands. He could not lose; with what he held no combination was possible which would beat him. Yet in spite of this knowledge the cold, sneering confidence of Kirby brought with it a strange fear. The man was a professional gambler. What gave him such recklessness? Why should he be so eager to risk such a sum on an inferior hand? McAfee, sitting next him, leaned over, managed to gain swift glimpse at what he held, and eagerly whispered to him a word of encouragement. The judge straightened up in his chair, grasped a filled glass someone had placed at his elbow, and gulped down the contents. The whispered words, coupled with the fiery liquor, gave him fresh courage.

"By heaven, Kirby, I'll do it!" he blurted out. "You can't bluff me on the hand I've got. Give me a sheet of paper, somebody—yes, that will do."
He scrawled a half-dozen lines, fairly digging the pen into the sheet in his fierce eagerness, and then signed the document, flinging the paper across toward Kirby.

"There, you bloodsucker," he cried insolently. "Is that all right? Will that do?"
The imperturbable gambler read it over slowly, carefully deciphering each word, his thin lips tightly compressed.
"You might add the words, 'This includes every chattel slave legally belonging to me,'" he said grimly.

"That is practically what I did say."
"Then you can certainly have no objection to putting it in the exact words I choose," calmly. "I intend to have what is coming to me if I win, and I know the law."
Beaucaire angrily wrote in the required extra line.
"Now what?" he asked.

"Let McAfee there sign it as a witness, and then toss it over into the pile." He smiled, showing a line of white teeth beneath his mustache.
"Nice little pot, gentlemen—the judge must hold some cards to take a chance like that," the words uttered with a sneer. "Fours, at least, or maybe he has had the luck to pick a straight flush."

Beaucaire's face reddened, and his eyes drew hard.
"That's my business," he said tersely. "Sign it, McAfee, and I'll call this crowing cockerel. You young fool, I played poker before you were born. There now, Kirby, I've covered your bet."
"Perhaps you would prefer to raise it?"

"You hell-hound—no! That is my limit, and you know it. Don't crawl now, or do any more bluffing. Show your hand—I've called you."
Kirby sat absolutely motionless, his cards lying flat down upon the table, the white fingers of one hand resting lightly upon them, the other arm concealed. He never once removed his gaze from Beaucaire's face, and his expression did not change, except for the almost insulting sneer on his lips. The silence was profound, the deeply interested men leaning forward, even holding their breath in intense eagerness. Each realized that a fortune lay on the table; knew that the old judge had madly staked his all on the value of those five unseen cards gripped in his fingers. Again, as though to bolster up his shaken courage, he stared at the face of each, then lifted his bloodshot eyes to the impassive face opposite.

"Beaucaire drew two kayards," whispered an excited voice near me.
"Hell! So did Kirby," replied another. "They're both of 'em old hands."
The sharp exhaust of a distant steam pipe below punctuated the silence, and several glanced about apprehensively. As this noise ceased Beaucaire lost all control over his nerves.
"Come on, play your hand," he de-

manded, "or I'll throw my cards in your face."
The insinuating sneer on Kirby's lips changed into the semblance of a smile. Slowly, deliberately, never once glancing down at the face of his cards, he turned them up one by one with his white fingers, his challenging eyes on the judge; but the others saw what was revealed—a ten-spot, a knave, a queen, a king and an ace.
"A straight flush!" someone yelled excitedly. "D—d if I ever saw one before!"

For an instant Beaucaire never moved, never uttered a sound. He seemed to doubt the evidence of his own eyes, and to have lost the power of speech. Then from nerveless hands his own cards fell face downward, still unrevealed, upon the table. The next moment he was on his feet, the chair in which he had been seated flung crashing behind him on the deck.
"You thief!" he roared. "You dirty, low-down thief; I held four aces—where did you get the fifth one?"

Kirby did not so much as move, nor betray even by a change of expression his sense of the situation. Perhaps he anticipated just such an explosion and was fully prepared to meet it. One hand still rested easily on the table, the other remaining hidden.
"So you claim to have held four aces," he said coldly. "Where are they?"

McAfee swept the discarded hand face upward and the crowd bent forward to look at four aces and a king.
"That was the judge's hand," he declared soberly. "I saw it myself before he called you, and told him to stay."

Kirby laughed—an ugly laugh showing his white teeth.
"The h—i you did? Thought you knew a good poker hand, I reckon. Well, you see I knew a better one, and it strikes me I am the one to ask questions," he sneered. "Look here, you men; I held one ace from the shuffle. Now what I want to know is where Beaucaire ever got his four? Pleasant little trick of you two—only this time it failed to work."

Beaucaire uttered one mad oath, and I endeavored to grasp him but missed my clutch. The force of his lurching body as he sprang forward overturned the table, the stakes jingling to the deck, but Kirby reached his feet in time to avoid the shock. His hand, which had been hidden, shot out suddenly, the fingers grasping a revolver, but he did not fire. Before the judge had gone half the distance he stopped, reeled suddenly, clutching at his throat, and plunged sideways. His body struck the overturned table, but McAfee and I grasped him, lowering the stricken man gently to the floor.

CHAPTER IV.

Kirby Shows His Hand.

That scene, with all its surroundings, remains indelibly impressed upon my memory. It will never fade while I live. The long, narrow, dingy cabin of the Little Warrior, its forward end unlighted and in a shadow, the single swinging lamp, suspended to a blackened beam above where the table had stood, barely revealing through its smoky chimney the after portion showing a row of stateroom doors on either side, some standing ajar, and that crowd of excited men surging about the fallen body of Judge Beaucaire, unable as yet to fully realize the exact nature of what had occurred, but conscious of impending tragedy. The overturned table and chairs, the motionless body of the judge, with Kirby standing erect just beyond, his face as clear-cut under the glare of light as a cameo, the revolver yet glistening in his extended hand, all composed a picture not easily forgotten.

Still this impression was only that of a brief instant. With the next I was upon my knees, lifting the fallen head, and seeking eagerly to discern some lingering evidence of life in the inert body. There was none, not so much as the faint flutter of a pulse, or suggestion of a heart throb. The man was already dead before he fell, dead before he struck the overturned table.
"Judge Beaucaire is dead," I announced gravely. "Nothing more can be done for him now."

The pressing circle of men hemming us, I fell back silently, reverently, the sound of their voices sinking into a subdued murmur. As I stood there, almost unconscious of their presence, still staring down at that upturned face, now appearing manly and patriotic in the strange dignity of its death mask, a mad burst of anger swept me, a fierce yearning for revenge—a feeling that this was no less a murder because nature had struck the blow. With hot words of reproach upon my lips I gazed across toward where Kirby was being standing a moment before. The gambler was no longer there—his place was vacant.

"Where is Kirby?" I asked, incredulous of his sudden disappearance.
For a moment no one answered; then a voice in the crowd croaked hoarsely:
"He just slipped out through that after door to the deck—him and Bill Carver."

"And the stakes?"
Another answered in a thin, piping treble.
"I reckon them two cusses took along the most of it. Enybody 'tain't yere, 'cept maybe a few coins that rolled under the table. It wasn't Joe Kirby who picked up the swag, fer I was a watchin' him, an' he never onct let go of his gun. Them damn sneak Carver must a did it, an' then the two of 'em just sorter nat'rally faded away through that door thar."

McAfee swore through his black beard, the full truth swiftly dawning upon him.
"Hell!" he exploded. "So that's the way of it. Then them two was in cahoots from the beginnin'. That's what I told the judge last night, but he said he didn't give a whoop; that he knew more poker than both of 'em put together. I tell yer them fellers stole that money, an' they killed Beaucaire—"

"Hold on a minute," I broke in, my mind cleared of its first passion, and realizing the necessity of control. "Let's keep cool, and go slow. While I believe McAfee is right, we are not going to bring the judge back to life by turning into a mob. There is no proof of cheating, and Kirby has the law behind him. When the judge died he didn't own enough to pay his funeral expenses. Now see here; I happen to know that he left two young daughters. Just stop, and think of them. We saw this game played, and there isn't a man here who believes it was played on the square—that two such hands were ever dealt, or drawn, in poker. We can't prove that Kirby manipulated things to that end; not one of us saw how he worked the trick. There is no chance to get him that way. Then what is it we ought to do? Why, I say, make the thief disgorge—and hanging won't do the business."

"Leave this settlement with me. Then I'll go at it. Two or three of you pick up the body, and carry it to Beaucaire's stateroom—forward there. The rest of you better straighten up the



The Revolver Yet Glistening in His Extended Hand.

cabin, while I go up and talk with Throckmorton a moment. After that I may want a few of you to go along when I hunt up Kirby. If he proves ugly we'll know how to handle him, McAfee!"

"I'm over here."
"I was just going to say that you better stay here, and keep the fellows all quiet in the cabin. We don't want our plan to leak out, and it will be best to let Kirby and Carver think that everything is all right; that nothing is going to be done."

I waited while several of them gently picked up the body, and bore it forward into the shadows. I slipped away, silently gained the door, and, unobserved, emerged onto the deserted deck without. The sudden change in environment sobered me, and caused me to pause and seriously consider the importance of my mission. Nothing less potent than either fear, or force, would ever make Kirby disgorge. Quite evidently the gambler had deliberately set out to ruin the planter, to rob him of every dollar. Even at the last moment he had coldly insisted on receiving a bill of sale so worded as to leave no possible loophole. He demanded all. The death of the judge, of course, had not been contemplated, but this in no way changed the result. That was an accident, yet I imagined, might not be altogether unwelcome, and I could not rid my memory of that shining weapon in Kirby's hand, or the thought that he would have used it had the need arose. Would he not then fight just as fiercely to keep, as he had to gain? Indeed, I had but one fact upon which I might hope to base action—every watcher believed those cards had been stacked, and that Beaucaire was robbed by means of a trick. Yet, could this be proven? Would any one of those men actually swear that he had seen a suspicious move? If not, then what was there left me except a mere bluff? Absolutely nothing.

"Knox escapes from the river only to encounter greater danger."
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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Cannot Praise this Remedy too Highly

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Judging from her letter, the misery and wretchedness endured by Mrs. Charlie Taylor, R. F. D. No. 1, Box 144, Dillon, S. C., must have been terrible. No one, after reading her letter, can continue to doubt the great healing power of PE-RU-NA for troubles due to catarrh or catarrhal conditions in any part of the body. Her letter is an inspiration to every sick and suffering man or woman anywhere. Here it is: "I suffered two years with catarrh of the head, stomach and bowels. Tried two of the best doctors, who gave me up. I then took PE-RU-NA and can truthfully say I am well. When I began to use PE-RU-NA, I weighed one hundred pounds. My weight now is one hundred and fifty. I cannot praise PE-RU-NA too highly, for it was a Godsend to me. I got relief from the first half bottle and twelve bottles cured me. I advise all sufferers to take PE-RU-NA."

As an emergency remedy in the home, there is nothing quite the equal of this reliable, time-tried medicine, PE-RU-NA. Thousands place their sole dependence on it for coughs, colds, stomach and bowel trouble, constipation, rheumatism, pains in the back, sciatic and loins and to prevent the grip and Spanish Flu. To keep the blood pure and maintain bodily strength and robustness, take PE-RU-NA. You can buy PE-RU-NA anywhere in either tablet or liquid form.

THE "BLUES"

Caused by Acid-Stomach

Millions of people who worry, are despondent, have spells of mental depression, feel blue and are often melancholy, believe that these conditions are due to outside influences over which they have little or no control. Nearly always, however, they can be traced to an internal source—acid-stomach. Not to be wondered at, Acid-stomach, beginning with such well defined symptoms as indigestion, belching, heartburn, bloating, etc., will, if not checked, in time affect to some degree or other all the vital organs. The nervous system becomes deranged. Digestion suffers. The blood is impoverished. Health and strength are undermined. The victim of acid-stomach, although he may not know the cause of his ailments, feels his hope, courage, ambition and energy slipping. And truly life is dark—not words, but the man or woman who has acid-stomach!
Get rid of it! Don't let acid-stomach hold you back, wreck your health, make your days miserable, make you a victim of the "blues" and gloomy thoughts! There is a marvelous remedy called EATONIC that brings, oh! such quick relief from your stomach misery—sets your stomach to rights—makes it strong, cool, sweet, and comfortable. Helps you get back your strength, vigor, vitality, enthusiasm and good cheer. So many thousands upon thousands of sufferers have used EATONIC with such marvellously helpful results that we advise you to feel the same way if you will just give it a trial. Get a big 40 cent box of EATONIC—the good-tasting medicine that makes life a bit of candy—from your druggist today. He will return your money if results are not even more than you expect.

EATONIC

(FOR YOUR ACID-STOMACH)

Restless Life.
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"You know, dear," she said, "all the stars are worlds like ours."
"Well, if that's so, I shouldn't like to live on one of them," declared Helen stoutly. "It would be so horrid when it twinkled!"

Samson, Originator of Riddles.
The first riddle ever recorded was pronounced by Samson in the Book of Judges, 14th chapter, 14th verse.

For Women Approaching Middle Life

Ottawa, Kan.—"When I reached middle life I was very nervous and almost prostrated. I saw Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription, his Golden Medical Discovery advertised and decided to try them. I took six bottles of the Favorite Prescription first. During the first week of the treatment I seemed weaker but I was advised by a neighbor to keep on taking it, and during the second week I improved rapidly and could do my work—where before I could not even comb my hair. I finished the treatment, using the 'Golden Medical Discovery' also, and I was permanently cured."
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When a girl becomes a woman, when a woman becomes a mother, when a woman passes through the changes of middle life, are the three periods of life when health and strength are most needed to withstand the pain and distress often caused by severe organic disturbances.
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