

CARDOME

A ROMAN OF KENTUCKY

BY ANNA C. MINOGUE CHAPTER XXXIV

And thus Hal came back to Cardome and these things followed his coming: When Mr. Davidson saw that the man who had been the occupant of the room had withdrawn and he felt convinced that in the lonely house the mistress's sleepless eyes were piercing the gloom for the first streak of dawn, which, she fondly hoped, was to herald the hour of long delayed triumph. After some delay he stood again in the second parlor, and as he waited for her to appear his thoughts went back to other days, when he and this woman were young. The Park was not then what it was now, for her father's love for wine and horses piled up debts against his ancestral estate; but he had continued to dispense hospitality with the lavish hand of a Kentuckian, and it was only a matter of time until the Park would go under the hammer, when the tragic event entered his only child's bitter life and changed it forever. When Mr. Davidson was young, he had not only old-fashioned Mr. Powell, but also secured her father's plantation; and after her husband's death, it was found that the debts of the Park had been transferred to Willow-wild, and the fate predicted for the home of the Kertridges came instead to the home of the Powells.

And the man who had so often been the guest at both houses in those long, dead years, mused over their sad stories, until the sharp, rasping voice of her whom he had travelled from Cardome to see fell on his ears, as she said:

"You have come again. Is it to threaten this time, or to plead?" He folded his arms and looked at her for a moment; then, with some pity in his voice, he said:

"To do neither. God sometimes sternly sets aside His human instruments and reaches forth His own terrible hand to save the innocent and punish the guilty. Oh, woman! poor, weak woman! who dared usurp God's prerogative and claim for yourself the right and power to avenge your fancied wrong, learn now, as others in like bitterness have learned, that God's words are not vain words, that vengeance is His to day, as it was yesterday, and will be forever. While you are waiting here for tomorrow's dawn, to see a man die at your gateway for the offence of being the son of one you hate, by the inscrutable workings of that Power you have defied, his place has been filled by the best loved son of your only friend, that man you held, and I know you still hold, dearer than a brother. Yes; this afternoon at 3 o'clock Clay Powell rode from the Georgetown jail to liberty, and one hour ago Hal Todd died at your gate—shot to death by his brother's Union soldiers."

"No! No! No!" she cried, in wild, thrilling tones, womanlike hurrying back her refusal to believe that which her reason told her was truth.

"Then go to Cardome, and learn how true are my words. Yes, go to Cardome! Look at your work—on that boy lying dead under his mother's picture, on his brother, worse than dead, on the white haired old father, he who, when all the world turned from you with the detestation you merited, was your friend, your advocate, your savior. When Mary Clay Powell lay dead—do you know by whose hand—and I vowed that, unless the justice her murderers deserved dealt out, justice Heaven demanded, that never again would I mingle with those friends of mine, that I would cut myself off from them and all society, John Todd stood here and pleaded with Walter Powell and Lewis Castleton for the mercy of their silence for you. Yes; he would snap the golden chain that bound us asur in a friendly bond that time nor sorrow nor death could sever, sooner than have the world know what you had done. His words prevailed, but from that day we four stood apart. Lewis Castleton, when he felt his life drawing to a close, returned to the master of Cardome; to-morrow, Walter Powell will go back. So will I. My vow is at last fulfilled: Mary Clay Powell's death is amply avenged!"

for as he was speaking the woman flung herself on the floor, crying piteously to God for pardon and mercy, which she felt man would not, could not give. And with one more glance at her, Mr. Davidson turned from the room.

Thus she lay through the long hours of that night, and the rising of the sun found her still crouching on the floor, her face hidden from his light. After a while the aged nurse hobbled into the room, and then the mistress arose. She looked long and earnestly on the black face, and for the first time in all her life shuddered at the inhuman ugliness. What was passing through the mind of the mistress seemed to be communicated to the mind of the negro, for she threw her apron over her head. But the black woman, old, ugly, the perpetual reminder of her crimes, was all on earth she had to turn to for sympathy and love; so she crept to his side and spoke to her as a child might have done. The words brought the tears to her black face; then the apron front reached out her neatly gloved hands and said:

"Take them off, mammy; I shall need them no more. They have done their work. It was the work of the evil one, and they did it as his instruments always do their work.

"These can not undo what the wooden hands have done!" she cried when the servant had obeyed the command, and the poor maimed arms showed under the flowing sleeves. "Perhaps they can plead." And, dressed as she was, with no shawl or head covering to protect her against the sharp November air, she rushed from the house and turned toward Cardome. Kind hands unfastened the door for her, but she knew the old house too well to need directions toward the library. Tom was still sitting by the table, with his face bowed on it, but she did not see him; Walter Powell was walking the floor, with his head bent low on his breast, but she did not heed him. She saw only one, headed only one, she bent, white-haired man standing on the hearth stone, with face turned toward the door, as if expecting her coming. She tried to reach his side, but her strength failed her. She sank on her knees, and lifting toward him her cruelly maimed arms, cried:

"John!"

Across the space of carpeted floor the eyes of the man and woman met in a second's terrible silence, a second which, like the moment of death, was long enough for all their past and present to sweep again before them. Then he hurried to her side and lifted her to her feet, while he said, half-reproachfully:

"Did you think you need come to me like this, Angie, my dear sister? And she bowed her head on his shoulder and wept there, as he held her before him, when she had told him that she had released the man she loved because his heart belonged to another. And that man had now passed in his walk and stood regarding her and his friend with deep-sunken, sad eyes. There was no trace on face or figure of the beauty and grace that had made women love, and men admire, Walter Powell; and when, at length, Mrs. Powell raised her head from Judge Todd's shoulder and turned once more to her former lover, she trembled at the ruin before her, knowing it was her work. Yet the pride that had destroyed her own life and so many others refused to give utterance to her soul's cry for his pardon. She could kneel to the friend she had harmed unconsciously; she could not utter one word to the lover she had ruined deliberately. But long ago anger, hatred, and unforgiveness had died in the heart of Walter Powell, so he went to where she stood, and said to her:

"Angie, we have been enemies so long can we not be friends for the rest of our days? They will not be many."

She bowed her head before him and said, humbly: "Can you forgive me?"

"I have forgotten all that long ago," he interrupted. It was then the library door again unrolled and Davidson, the master of Willow-wild entered, followed by two women. His face was shaven of its heavy beard, and as the eyes of Judge Todd fell on him he started forward, crying:

"Dupont, my friend! You have come back, too!" and they clasped hands, as brothers would. Tom had lifted his face at the first words spoken by Mrs. Powell, and during the scene that had followed had looked on with first in angry wonderment, then with fierce indignation. Now, as he heard that name spoken by his father, he sprang to his feet, but on turning and seeing the two women he sank again into his chair and laid his face against the wall. In eloquent silence the Judge clasped the hand of Mrs. Dupont, but a sob escaped him as he held the weeping Bessie to his breast. Then, the reunited and forgiven fled slowly out of the library to that room where their silent, beautiful peace-maker lay, watched by Virginia; and Tom and Bessie were left together.

The Duponts always kept their view. It was the motto of their house. Her grandfathers had kept his, and so well that not until he had come to the old house in Versailles, where for the past six months she and her mother had lived in poverty, their Alabama home having been destroyed and the plantation laid waste by the Union army, did Bessie know that relative was alive. But as she listened to his recital of the sorrow that had fallen on Tom, she had forgotten his words and so forgiven his defection. She was an older Bessie now. All the ways were gone, swallowed up by the early sorrow and the later misery and loss and poverty that had drained the young blood from her cheeks and dimmed the lustre of her beautiful eyes. The figure had lost all its graceful curves and was slender to thinness, which was made more pronounced by the plainness of the coarse dress she wore. There were no flashing jewels on the little hands, no string of pearls or rubies around her neck, and that first glimpse she had had of her left Tom doubtful if this strange woman were indeed Bessie. She waited a moment, when the others left, thinking he would look up or speak to her. But there was no word from the bowed figure, no movement; and she crossed to where he sat and laid a hand on his shoulder. Then he lifted his head, and as she saw his face, that the hand of age seemed in that one night to have smitten, all the woman's love and pity sprang into fullest life and made her cry out her sorrow that she once had given him pain:

"Oh, Tom, forgive me!" "Bessie!" He sprang to his feet. She held out her hands to him, but he turned away, with shamefully bowed head, for he remembered, with fierce hatred of himself, that he had once held the punning, cruel Clarisse dearer than this noble girl.

Her womanly discernment made plain to her the meaning of that action, and she said, with a sweet dignity:

"Tom, I was wrong that day, hasty, passionate. I should have known you better, known that my place in your heart was secure, for your honor, if nothing else, would keep it sacred for me. I should have been a little patient with that rival affection, believing that as you came to see the true nature of the one who inspired it, of necessity it must die. I should have proven myself worthy of the love and confidence you had in me. Instead," she went on falteringly, for Tom was now on his knees before her, with her hands pressed against his tear-wet face, "I broke in childish anger from the tie that bound us—Tom, Tom, I have forgotten my foolish words."

And after a while Tom and Bessie, hand clasped in bond, hastened toward the door, believing that as you came to see the true nature of the one who inspired it, of necessity it must die. I should have proven myself worthy of the love and confidence you had in me. Instead," she went on falteringly, for Tom was now on his knees before her, with her hands pressed against his tear-wet face, "I broke in childish anger from the tie that bound us—Tom, Tom, I have forgotten my foolish words."

There was still one, missing. But she came the next day, brought from her Louisville prison by the master of Willow-wild who demanded and obtained her immediate release, and the pardon of her family. The old Judge was waiting for her at the portico steps, and in his father's greeting the little crushed heart of Lucy Meneses found the only comfort life now held for it. From that hour she took a daughter's place at Cardome.

For three days Hal held court in the old house, while from far and near came friends and political foes to pay him homage. Then, at high noon on the third day, with military rite as befits a soldier and holy prayer as befits a Christian, they laid him by his mother's side, in the Georgetown cemetery, there to rest happily throughout time.

TO BE CONTINUED

CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE CORNER GROCERY

Will Allen Dromgoolle in The Arena for December

The boss had not returned; in truth, the probability was the boss would not return that night, inasmuch as he had generously offered the book-keeper, who was clerk as well, permission to go to his supper first. The clerk, however, had not noticed the blotter; other customers came in and claimed his attention. They were impatient too. It was a very busy night, and the books, he feared, would not be balanced after all. It was shabby, downright mean, of the boss not to come back at a time like this.

The new customer was old man Murdock from across the river, the suburbs. He had been rich once, owned a house up town, and belonged to the aristocracy. He had possessed the appurtenances to wealth, such as influence, leisure, at one time. He still was a gentleman, since nature, not circumstance, had the care of that. Every movement, every word, the very set of the threadbare broad-cloth, spoke the proud, the "well raised" gentleman of the Old South time. "Good evening, Mr. Riley," he said, when the clerk stumbled down from his perch. The male customer, the honor, he learned it from the boss, doubtless—called him "Riley." They generally said, "Hello, Riley." But the old Southerner was neither so rude nor so familiar. He said, "Good evening, Mr. Riley," much the same as he would have said to the president, "Good evening, Mr.—" and he touched his long, white, scholarly looking finger to the brim of his hat, though the hat was not lifted. Riley said, "Good evening," and wanted to know "what Mr. Murdock would look at."

He would have put the question in the same way had Mr. Murdock still possessed his thousands; and he would have put it no less respectfully had the gentleman of fallen fortunes come abegging. There is that about a gentleman which commands respect; great Nature willed it so. The customer was not hurried; he remarked upon the weather, and thawed himself before the big stove which never once broached the subject of Christmas, nor became at all familiar. He pitied the homeless such a night, hoped it would freeze out the tariff upon wool; then he asked, carelessly, as men of leisure might, "What is the price of bacon, Mr. Riley?"

"Eight dollars a hundred, Mr. Murdock," said Riley. The ex-millionaire slipped his white forefinger into his vest pocket. He never once broached the subject of Christmas, nor became at all familiar. He pitied the homeless such a night, hoped it would freeze out the tariff upon wool; then he asked, carelessly, as men of leisure might, "What is the price of bacon, Mr. Riley?"

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"I want to know the price of potatoes, Mr. Riley," she replied. "Sixty cents a bushel. How is the little boy to-night, Mrs. Elkins? Is he getting well for Christmas?" "Yes," said the woman. "He's 'sneezing' well; well 'n' happy. I fetched him to the graveyard this mornin'."

Riley dropped the potato he had taken from the tub, and looked up to see the woman's lip quiver. "What's the price o' them potatoes?"

"Fifteen cents a peck," she said. "There's four more left to feed besides the dead ones, though," she added quickly, "I ain't begrudgin' o' 'em victuals."

Riley measured a peck of the potatoes, and emptied them into her basket. Four months besides her own, and one little starveling left that day, "that blessed Christmas eve," in the graveyard. He found himself hoping, as he went back to the lot that they had buried the baby near his own deal. The big graveyard wouldn't feel so desolate, so weirdly lonesome, as he thought it must, to the dead baby, if the little child mother, his young wife, could find it out there among all that array of the common dead. "To S. Riley, 1 1/2 of peck of potatoes 06," the blue blotter had copied, or absorbed the entry, made it double, and absorbed the already begun to draw interest. The clerk, however, had not noticed the blotter; other customers came in and claimed his attention. They were impatient too. It was a very busy night, and the books, he feared, would not be balanced after all. It was shabby, downright mean, of the boss not to come back at a time like this.

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"I kothched yer Christmas gif', good marster; yer knows I did." "But you're a little early, Aunt Angie," said the clerk; "this is only Christmas eve."

"Aw, git up, marster. De ole nigger got her took all day termorror—b-g Christmas dinner fur de whi' folks. No res' fur de ole nigger, not even at Christmas. Bress de Lord, it ain't come but onc' a year."

She laughed again, but under the strange merriment Riley detected the weariness that was thankful; she, that thanked God that Christmas, the holiday of the Christ-child, came "but once a year."

Christmas! Christmas! Old season of mirth and misery! Who really enjoys it, after all?—Lazarus in the gutter or Dives among his coffers? The clerk ran his eye along the counters, the shelves, and even took in the big barrels, pushed back in the rear, out of the way. "Well, Aunt Angie, what shall the 'gif' be?"

He could see the bare toes where his torn old shoes fell away from the stinking floor. She needed shoes; he was about to go for a pair when she stopped him by a gesture. "Dam ar things, marster," she said, pointing to a string of masks—gaudy, hideous things, festooned from the ceiling. "I want one o' dem ar. De chillin' I lack dat sho."

He allowed her to select one, it was the face of a king, fat, jovial, white. She enjoyed it like a child. Christmas! Christmas! Old season of mirth and misery! Who really enjoys it, after all?—Lazarus in the gutter or Dives among his coffers? The clerk ran his eye along the counters, the shelves, and even took in the big barrels, pushed back in the rear, out of the way. "Well, Aunt Angie, what shall the 'gif' be?"

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He staggered out and Riley stepped to the door to watch him reel safely beyond the boss's big glass window. There was another figure occupying the sheltered nook about the window. Riley discovered the pale, pinched little face pressed against the pane before he opened the door. The little wail was so utterly lost in wonder of the Christmas display set forth behind the big panes that he did not hear the door open or know that he was observed until the clerk's voice recalled his wandering senses.

"See here, sonny, you are marring the glass with your breath. There will be ice on that pane in less than ten minutes."

The culprit started, and almost lost his balance as he grasped at a little wooden crutch that slipped from his numb fingers and rolled down upon the pavement.

"Hello!" The clerk stepped out into the night and rescued the poor little prop. Humanity! Humanity! When all is told, thy great heart still is master. "Go in there," the clerk pointed to the door, "and warm yourself at the fire. It is Christmas; all the world should be warm at Christmas."

The wail said nothing; it was enough to creep near to the great stove and watch the Christmas display from his wretched corner. "There's that in the sound of a child's crush strikes way down to my boots, the clerk told himself as he made an entry after the boy had left the store. "Whenever I hear one I—Hello! what is it, stusy?"

A little girl stood at the counter. A faxen-haired, blue-eyed little maiden; alone, at night, and beautiful. Growing up for what? Crippled feet, at all events, are not swift to forget. The clerk sighed. The Christmas eve was full of shadows—shadows that would be lost in the garish days of the morrow. He leaned upon the counter. "What do you want, little one?"

Only a beggar understands that trick of asking simple bread. Ah, well! Christmas must have its starvelings too! The big blotter, when he did remove to go and wait upon some new customer he quitted the voice of prudence with the reflection that his own woe one might stand at a bread counter some pitiless Christmas eve, and this loaf, sent upon the waters of mercy, might come floating back; who could tell since, and the clerk smiled.

The counter was crowded; it was nearing the hour for closing, and business was growing brisk. And some of the customers were provokingly slow, some of the poorer ones keeping the richer ones waiting. It isn't difficult to buy when there is no fear of the funds running short. There were one who bought oysters, fruit, and macaroni, \$10, all told, in less than half the time another was dividing 25 cents into a possible purchase of a bit of cheese, a strip of bacon, and a handful of dry beans. And old Mrs. Mottles, the shop girl's landlady at the big yellow tenement, up town a bit, took a full twenty minutes hunting over cheap bits of steak, stale bread, and a roast that "ought to go mighty low, seeing it was tolerable tough and some grist-ten; he had permission to close at eleven, and it was ten minutes after. He went out and put up the shutters, came back, and began putting away the books.

The big ledger had been scarcely touched; he had been too busy to post that night. "Mr. Riley? Mr. Riley? Just a minute before you close up, Mr. Riley."

He went back to the counter, impatiently; he was very tired. A woman with a baby in her arms stood there waiting. "I am late," she said, "almost too late. I want a bite for to-morrow. Give me what will go farthest for that."

She laid a silver quarter upon the counter. "How many of you?" said Riley. "It might make a lunch for one—" The woman shook her head. "A drunkard counts for one when it comes to eatin', any hows," she said, and laughed—a hard bitter laugh. "He counts for somethin' when he's drunk," she went on, the poor tongue made free by misery that would repent itself the morrow. "May be man, but it likely. I've got the proofs o' it."

She set the child upon the counter and poked back her sleeve, glanced a moment at long, black bruises that reached from wrist to elbow, then quickly, lowered the sleeve again. "Give me somethin' to eat, Mr. Riley, for the sake o' your own wife, an'—an' the Christmas."

His own wife! Why she was safe, safe forever from misery like that. He almost shrieked it to the big blue blotter. And then he looked to see what he had written. He almost trembled, lest in his agony he had entered upon the master's wall. Elizabeth Riley, under the snow—Christmas. He had written it somewhere, upon his heart, perhaps, but surely somewhere. The entry in the boss' book was all right; it read, a trifle extravagantly, however:

To T. Riley Dr. 1 shoulder, 10 lbs. at 10 cts. \$1 00 2 lbs. coffee at 80 cts. 20 2 lbs. sugar at 12 1/2 cts. 25 8 doz. eggs at 15 cts. 45

and the Christmas time. Then he thrust the book into the safe, turned the combination lock into the stove, lowered the gas, and went home.

Home to the little attic and the crippled nestling. She was asleep, but a tiny red stubbing, worn at the heel, but thoroughly clean, hung beside the chimney. He tiptoed to the bed, and looked down at the little sleeper. Tears were a smile upon the baby lips, as if in dream the little feet were made straight, and was skipping through sunny meadows, while their owner's hand was clasped fast in the hand of the hero of all childish adoration—the mythical, magical Santa Claus.

The little hands were indeed clasped lightly upon a bit of cardboard that peeped from beneath the delicate fingers, upon the breast of the innocent sleeper. Riley drew it quickly away. It was a Christmas card the neighbor woman had picked up in some home of the rich where she had gone that day to carry home some sewing. It bore a face of Christ a multitude, eager, questioning, and underneath a text:

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye did it unto Me."

He sighed, thinking of the hungry horde, the fainting multitude at the grocery that Christmas eve. His heart had sohd for them; he understood so well what it was to be wretched, lonely, hungry. Not one of these had helped babies in their need, in words; not one had wished him a Merry Christmas. Yet, for what he had done, because of it, the little red stubbing by the chimney-place would be half-emptied. He hadn't missed their thanks, poor starvelings, and to say "Merry Christmas," would have been to mock. Yet he fancied a smile touched for an instant the lips of the pale Nazarene—those lips said to have never smiled, as he slipped the card to its place under the wax hands folded upon the child's heart.

And after a little while he was lying by her side, too tired to sleep, thinking of the unbalanced ledger and the books that must be posted before the year should end. At last he slept. But the big ledger refused to leave him; even in dreams it followed to annoy him, and drag him back to the little suburban grocery. And when he unlocked the safe and took it out, lo! he was surrounded by a host of beggars: boys without money wanting firecrackers; women with starving babies in their arms; little girls, crying for bread; old men, young men, white, black—all the beggars of the big round world. They seized the boss' big book and began to scribble in it, until a little girl with a crutch began to beat them off. And when they were gone he could still hear the noise of them—a mighty rustle of wings; and he saw they had gathered all about him, in the air; and they no longer begged,—they laughed. And then there was removed he saw that it was Christ.

Then he took back his old ledger, and upon the credit side where the balance was not made, a text had been entered. It filled the page down to the bottom line:

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto Me." And full across the page, as plain as if it had been writ in blood, ran the long red lines that showed the sheet was balanced.

HINT TO HEADS OF FAMILIES

At a season when recreation is largely confined to reading, it behooves the heads of families to examine into the sort of literature that comes to their homes. No father or mother with the least sense of responsibility would allow a child to associate with criminals. And yet the secular papers, which are accessible to the youngest members of the family, are filled with reports of all sorts of crimes. In many cases these reports are so detailed as to corrupt the minds of young readers and incite them to acts of immorality. As for books, some of the most popular are at least dangerous reading. Parents who desire to have their sons and daughters "unspotted from the world" instead of followers of its fashions will put a ban on all such literature as they would exclude criminals from their homes. If it be dishonorable and demoralizing to associate with disreputable men and women, it is certainly to no one's credit or profit to form their acquaintance in books and newspapers which reveal their minds and describe their deeds.—Ave Maria.

XMAS DECORATING

Why not start a rose day in your city or town for patriotic or church purposes. We are headquarters for same. Rose Buds will cost you \$1.50 a 100, and retail at 10 cents each; Carnations \$1.10 a 100; Violets \$8.00 a 100 bunches; they all sell at 10 cents each; Chrysanthemums 50 cents a doz.; Jack Roses with buds 75 cents a doz.; Carnations 15 cents a doz.; Waxed Roses 50 cents a doz.; Poinsettias \$2.00 a doz.; Holly Vines \$1.00 a doz.; Rose Vines \$1.00 a doz.; White Holly Vines \$1.25 a doz.; Yards; Poinsettias 50 cents a doz.; doz.; Easter Lilies 50 cents a doz.; Xmas Grape Roses 50 cents a doz.; Xmas Bells 2 for 5 cents. We will pay postage or Express on all orders of \$1.00 or over. Write for our new price list. Brantford Artificial Flower Co., Brantford, Ont.