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CAMERON COUNTY PRESS, THURSDAY, JULY 28, 1904.

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For the Season We have opened and are displaying a choice line of . .

THE WIDOW THOMAS B. MONTFORT

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particularly attractive, and back East, where women were plentiful, she would have considered herself fortunate in the possession of a single lover. Yet, before she had been in Pigeon flat a month she had a dozen admirers at her feet, and had received at least half that many proposals of marriage. In the flat, woman was a rare article, and the men could not afford to be over-exacting in their tastes regarding female charms

Among the widow's admirers was Blue Thompson. He was a big, burly chap who had made his advent into the camp with a hurrah and a flourish. He was not at all averse to having the impression go abroad that he was a bad man from away back, and when it began to be whispered about that he had a record as a slayer of men he did not trouble himself to make a denial.

It was not long after Thompson's arrival at the flat until he had things pretty much his own way in the matter of mak ing love to the widow. His rivals were only ordinary every-day citizens, who valued their lives as something worthy of preservation, and who, therefore, were inclined to be more or less timid in the face of danger. None of them possessed a desire to run counter to a man who had acquired the unpleasant habit of shooting his fellow-men on the slight-est provocation. Moreover, the widow was rather taken with Thompson's big-ness and boldness, and she showed a decided preference for his company. So the others reluctantly held aloof from her, giving Thompson a clear field.

In the saloons and gambling halls at the flat there had, from the first, been much betting on the result of the freefor-all contest for the widow's hand Up to the time of Thompson's arrival the betting had been at even money with nobody able to score as a favorite After he came, however, there was a decided change. He soon became a favorite and after a time bets were offered on him at odds of five to one, with no

Then, one day, there was a new ar rival in the camp. It was a little, sparely built man, who answered to the name of Bob George. He had a soft voice, a smiling face, and manners so gentle that they were almost childlike. He had the appearance of a harmless, inoffensive sort of being, who could be run over and trampled under foot with impunity. In the flat he was considered too insignificant to merit more than a passing

Before Bob had been in the camp many days it became apparent to every one that he had been smitten by the widow's charms, and had joined her galaxy of ular." admirers. Like the others, however, he The evinced a wholesome regard for Blue Thompson's claims, and worshipped at a safe distance. He never presumed to seek her society, and if he ever addressed her at all, it was in the most distant manner. But the way his eyes followed her, and the way he spoke of her to others, was proof positive that he loved

Bob's admiration of the widow was the source of much amusement in the flat. People laughed at his presumption in daring to worship, even at a distance a woman who had haif the camp at her feet, and who could have Blue Thompson any day, by simply saying the word. Many jokes, regarding his love, were cracked at Bob's expense by the witty ones at the flat. Bob, himself, was not unaware of all these things, but he qui-etly went his way, keeping his own counsel, and saying nothing. One night, about a month after Bob's

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arrival at the flat, there was a large crowd collected down at "Joe's Place." Bob was there, and so was Blue Thomp-son. There was a good deal of betting going on, in one way and another, and a good deal of drinking, too. Thompson was in the thick of it all, but Bob sat in a corner, taking no part in any of it.

After awhile some one turned to Joe

some of the spectators stood about, makng remarks None of these were at all complimentary to Bob. One man went far as to say:

against a sure thing, no matter how great the odds in his favor. Any man of ordinary sense wouldn't take that bet at odds of 100 to one." "Any man with a particle of sense at all wouldn't," another added.

Bob heard these remarks, but appar-ently, they did not disturb him in the least. He was as calm as a summer breeze, and on his face was that bland,

pleasant smile. He was so childlike and trusting that it seemed almost like stealing milk from a baby to accept his offer to bet. A man more honorable than Blue Thompson would have hesitated to take advantage of his unsophisticated innocence.

When the bet was all arranged, and the stakes properly deposited. Joe said: "Now, how and when is this thing to be decided?"

Bob looked up at Thompson, trustingly, as if inviting him to answer. The latter, assuming an important, swaggering, arrogant air, and ignoring Bob entirely, said: "A week is all the time I want for

marrying the widow. You can prepare to hand over the stakes to me by that

"And if you don't marry her," Bob said, questioningly, "I get the money." "Of course," Thompson answered, condescendingly. "But, if I were you, I would not lay awake of nights, planning out how to invest it." "Oh, I won't," Bob replied. "I never

lose sleep over things like that. But, why should we wait a week to decide this thing? Why not decide it right now?" Thompson laughed and the crowd joined in. Bob was certainly very funny. "Do you think a man can decide a

thing like this in two minutes?" Thompson asked.

"I can," Bob replied.

"You can? How?" "I'll show you."

In a flash Bob had pulled his gun and held it pointed at Blue Thompson's head. The latter started back, with surprise, and the crowd began to move restlessly. "Be quiet, gentlemen, everybody," Bob said, and the softness and gentle ness was all gone out of his voice, and the smile had left his face. "This is a little matter of business, and it is all quite regular, I assure you."

"But, there shall be no murder here," Joe interposed. "You shall not resort to that to win your bet. Men, disarm him. Several of the spectators started to-ward Bob, but before they could lay

their hands on him he threw back the lappel of his coat and revealed a detective's badge. Those who had started to interfere fell back.

"There will be nobody hurt," Bob said, "unless some of you try to interfere with me in the discharge of my duty. As I said, this thing is all proper and reg-

There was a long and death-like silence. Bob, calm and cool, looked at Thompson, and the latter, gloomy and cowering, looked at Bob. The spectators, their faces pictures of astonishment, looked enquiringly from one to the other. Finally, Joe broke the silence

by saying: What does it all mean?"

"It means, simply," Bob replied, "that Blue Thompson is not Blue Thompson at all, and that, instead of being a brave, 'bad man,' he is only a common mur-derer. He killed an old man, stole that \$5,000, and then ran away and changed his name. I have been looking for him for about a year, for he is badly wanted.' In the hearts of some of those who were admirers of the widow a glad feel-ing began to creep up. It would not be such a bad thing to have so formidable a rival as Blue Thompson out of the way. Some of them, who had felt their chances of winning the woman as hopeless, took fresh courage, and resolved to re-enter the contest. On the morrow, they told themselves, they would lay fresh siege to her heart.

Presently, the door opened and a man came in. Without a word he walked over to Blue Thompson, snapped a pair of handcuffs on him, and relieved him

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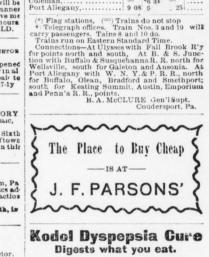
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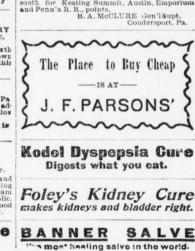
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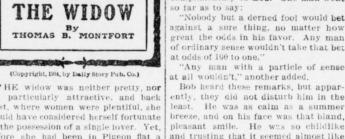
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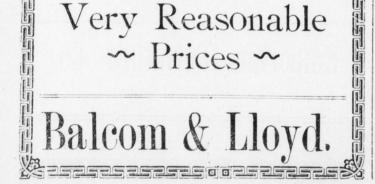
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The sea from the second

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and said "How is the betting on the widow,

now "Nothing doing," Joe replied. "What's the odds on Thompson? "The same old thing-five to one-but no takers.'

"Thompson seems to have a sure cinch. Guess if it was ten to one there wouldn't be anybody fool enough to go against him.

Thompson, who had been standing with his back to the speakers, turned around and brought his fist down on the bar.

"Of course, I've got a sure cinch," he said. "and to prove that I know what I'm talking about, I'll tell you what I'll do. I've got \$5,000 that says I'll marry the widow, and I stand ready to put it up against any man's \$500 who says] won't.

He glared around on the crowd, as if inviting somebody to take him up, if any one dared. But everybody was silent. A minute passed, then Bob George arose and walked over to the bar.

"That's pretty big odds you're offer ing," he said to Thompson, "and it seems like somebody ought to take your bet.

"Why don't you take it. then?" Thompson asked, and a laugh went around the room.

"Me? Oh, I never gamble," Bob re plied, in his soft, gentle voice. "Still, it seems like a shame to let a bet like that go by.

"Then, you'd better take it. Nobody else seems to want it. Bob was silent and thoughtful for a

minute, then he said, quietly: "Well, maybe I'd better. I happen to

have \$500. Put up your money." sers and ropes a While the bet was being arranged the Britsh fleet.

To the men in the saloon there was something familiar looking about this man, although they could not remember ver having seen him. He was a stranger in the flat, beyond a doubt, yet somehow, they felt that it had not been fong since they had looked on his features. "But, where?" they asked them-selves, "and when?"

The man looked around on the crowd and saw the puzzled look on the faces He understood and burst into a loud,

hearty laugh. 'For shame, for shame!" he cried.

"I'm disappointed in you all. To think that not one of you recognizes me, when you have seen me every day for weeks and some of you have professed to ad-mire me greatly! It seems cruel and disappointing that men should so soon forget the loved features of the one they profess to adore!"

There was a long and awkward pause, then some one said: "It is the widow."

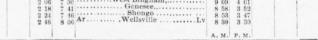
The man looked up with a smile.

"Yes," he said, "I was the widow, but, now, I am a detective. I'm sorry if any of you feel disappointed, and I trust that I shall leave no broken hearts, here, when I go away. You have all made it yery pleasant for me, and to show that

I am not ungrateful I want you all to come up and have one with me."

At first there was some hesitation, for the disappointed lovers felt sore, but, presently, they thought better of it, and, treating the matter as a good joke, lined up at the bar and had, not only one, but several.

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