

# KEITH OF THE BORDER

A TALE OF THE PLAINS  
By RANDALL PARRISH  
AUTHOR OF 'MY LADY OF THE SOUTH'  
WHEN WILDERNESS WAS KING ETC. ETC.  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY DEARBORN MELVILLE

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## CHAPTER IX.

### The Girl of the Cabin.

He saw Neb drop down before the blazing fireplace, and curl up like a tired dog, and observed her take the lamp, open the door into the other



"I Accept Any Terms You Desires."

room a trifle, and slip silently out of sight. He remembered staring vaguely about the little room, still illumined by the flames, only half comprehending, and then the reaction from his desperate struggle with the elements overcame all resolution, and he dropped his head forward on the table, and lost consciousness. Her hand upon his shoulder aroused him, startled into wakefulness, yet he scarcely realized the situation.

"I have placed food for the negro beside him," she said quietly, and for the first time Keith detected the soft blur in her speech.

"You are from the South!" he exclaimed, as though it was a discovery.

"Yes—and you?"

"My boyhood began in Virginia—the negro was an old-time slave in our family."

She glanced across at the black, now sitting up and eating voraciously. "I thought he had once been a slave; one can easily tell that. I did not ask him to sit here because, if you do not object, we will eat here together. I have also been almost as long without food. It was so lonely here, and—and I hardly understood my situation—and I simply could not force myself to eat."

He distinguished her words clearly enough, although she spoke low, as if she preferred what was said between them should not reach the ears of the negro, yet somehow, for the moment, they made no adequate impression on him. Like a famished wolf he began on the coarse fare, and for ten minutes hardly lifted his head. Then his eyes chanced to meet hers across the narrow table, and instantly the gentleman reawoke to life.

"I have been a perfect brute," he acknowledged frankly, "with no thought except for myself. Hunger was my master, and I ask your forgiveness, Miss MacLaire."

Her eyes smiled.

"I am so very glad to have any one here—any one—in whom I feel even a little confidence—that nothing else greatly matters. Can you both eat, and listen?"

Keith nodded, his eyes full of interest, searching her face.

"Whoever I may be, Mr. Keith, and really that seems only of small importance, I came to Fort Larned seeking some trace of my only brother, whom we last heard from there, where he had fallen into evil companionship. On the stage trip I was fortunate enough to form acquaintance with a man who told me he knew where I could meet Fred, but that the boy was hiding because of some trouble he had lately gotten into, and that I should have to proceed very carefully so as not to lead the officers to discover his whereabouts. This gentleman was engaged in some business at Carson City, but he employed a man to bring me to this place, and promised to get Fred, and meet me here the following day. There must have been some failure in the plans, for I have been here entirely alone now for three days. It has been very lonesome, and—and I've been a little frightened. Perhaps I ought not to have come, and I am not certain what kind of a place this is. I was so afraid when you came, but I am not afraid now."

"You have no need to be," he said soberly, impressed by the innocent candor of the girl, and feeling thankful that he was present to aid her. "I could not wrong one of the South."

"My father always told me I could trust a Southern gentleman under any circumstances. Mr. Hawley was from my own State, and knew many of our old friends. That was why I felt such unusual confidence in him, although he was but a traveling acquaintance."

"Mr. Hawley?"

"The gentleman whom I met on the stage."

"Oh, yes; you said he was in business in Carson City, but I don't seem to remember any one of that name."

"He was not there permanently; only to complete some business deal."

"And your brother? I may possibly have known him."

She hesitated an instant, her eyes dropping, until completely shaded by the long lashes.

"He—he was rather a wild boy, and ran away from home to enlist in the army. But he got into a bad set, and—and deserted. That was part of the trouble which caused him to hide. He enlisted under the name of Fred Willoughby. Mr. Hawley told me this much, but I am afraid he did not tell me all."

"And he said you would meet him here?"

Keith gazed about the bare surroundings wonderingly. What was this place, hidden away in the midst of the desert, isolated in a spot where not even Indians roamed. Could it be a secret rendezvous of crime, the headquarters of desperadoes, of cattle rustlers, of the highwaymen of the Santa Fe Trail—a point to which they could ride when hard pressed, certain of hiding here in safety? He began to suspect this, but, if so, who then was this Hawley, and with what object had he sent this girl here? Every way he turned was to confront mystery, to face a new puzzle. Whatever she might be—even the music hall singer he believed—she had been inveigled here innocently enough. Even now she possessed only the most vague suspicion that she had been deceived. The center of the whole plot, if there was a plot, must be Hawley.

"Yes," she replied, "he said that this was one of the stations of a big ranch on which Fred was employed, and that he would certainly be here within a day or two."

"You met Hawley on the stage coach? How did you become acquainted?"

"We were alone for nearly fifty miles," her voice faltering slightly, "and—and he called me what you did."

"Christie MacLaire?"

"Yes; he—he seemed to think he knew me, and I needed help so much that I let him believe so. I thought it could do no harm, and then, when I found he actually knew Fred, I didn't think of anything else, only how fortunate I was to thus meet him. Surely something serious must have happened, or he would have been here before this. Do you—do you suppose there is anything wrong?"

Keith did not smile nor change posture. The more he delved into the matter, the more serious he felt the situation to be. He knew all those ranches lying south on the Canadian, and was aware that this was no outstation. No cattle ever came across that sandy desert unless driven by rustlers, and no honest purpose could account for this isolated hut. There had been frequent robberies along the trail, and he had overheard tales of mysterious disappearances in both Larned and Carson City. Could it be that he had now, accidentally, stumbled upon the rendezvous of the gang? He was not a man easily startled, but this thought sent his heart beating. He knew enough to realize what such a gang would naturally consist of—deserters, outlaws, rustlers; both Indians and whites, no doubt, combined under some desperate leadership. Gazing into the girl's questioning eyes he could scarcely refrain from blurting out all he suspected. Yet why should he? What good could it do? He could not hope to bear her south to the "Bar X" Ranch, for the ponies were already too thoroughly exhausted for such a journey; he dared not turn north with her, for that would mean his own arrest, leaving her in worse condition than ever. If he only knew who this man Hawley was, his purpose, and plans! Yet what protection could he and Neb prove, alone here, and without arms? All this flashed through his mind in an instant, leaving him confused and uncertain.

"I hope not," he managed to say in answer to her query. "But it is rather a strange mix-up all around, and I confess I fail to comprehend its full meaning. It is hardly likely your friends will show up to-night, and by morning perhaps we can decide what is best to do. Let me look around outside a moment."

Her eyes followed him as he stepped through the door into the darkness; then her head dropped into the support of her hands. There was silence except for the crackling of the fire, until Neb moved uneasily. At the

sound the girl looked up, seeing clearly the good-natured face of the negro.

"Yo' don't nebbber need cry, Missus," he said soberly, "so long as Massa Jack done 'greed to look after yo'."

"Have—have you known him long?"

"Has I knowed him long, honey? Ebber sence befo' de wah. Why I done knowed Massa Jack when he waz't more'n dat high. Lawd, he sho' waz a lively youngster, but mighty

good hearted to us niggers."

She hesitated to question a servant, and yet felt she must uncover the truth.

"Who is he? Is he all he claims to be—a Virginia gentleman?"

All the loyalty and pride of slavery days was in Neb.

"He sho' am, Missus; dar ain't nuthin' higher in ol' Virginia dan de Keiths. Dey ain't got much money sence the Yankees come down dar, but dey's quality folks jest de same. I was done born on de ol' Connel's plantation, and I reck'n dar wad't no finer man ebber libed. He was done killed in de wah. Ad' Massa Jack he was a captain; he rode on hossback, an' Lawdy, but he did look scrumptious when he first got his uniform. He done fought all through de wah, an' dey say Giral Lee done shook hands wid him, an' said how proud he was ter know him. You kin sut'tly tie to Massa Jack, Missus."

The negro's voice had scarcely ceased when Keith came in again, closing the door securely behind him.

"All quiet outside," he announced, speaking with new confidence. "I wanted to get an understanding of the surroundings in case of emergency," he explained, as if in answer to the questioning of the brown eyes gravely uplifted to his face. "I see there is quite a corral at the lower end of this island, safely hidden behind the fringe of cottonwoods, and a log stable back of the house. Is the creek fordable both ways?"

"I think so; the man who brought me here rode away south."

"And are you going to trust yourself to my care?"

She came around the table with hands extended. He took them into his grasp, looking down into her eyes.

"Yes," she said softly, "I am going to trust you, Captain Keith."

He laughed.

"Captain, hey? You must have been talking with that black rascal there."

The swift color flooded her face, but her hands remained imprisoned.

"I just done tol' her who de Keiths was down in ol' Virginia, sah," burst in Neb indignantly. "I sho' don't want nobody to think I go trapstap' round wid any low white trash."

The gray eyes and the brown, gazing into one another, smiled with understanding.

"Oh, well," Keith acknowledged, genially, "I cannot say I am sorry you know something of my past glories; if one can't have a future, it is some source of pride to have a past to remember. But now about the present. We're not much protection to any one, the way we're fixed, as we are unarmed."

"There is a big revolver hanging in a holster in the other room," she answered, "and a short, sawed-off gun of some kind, but I don't know about ammunition."

"May we investigate?"

"Most certainly," and she threw open the intervening door. As the two stepped into the other apartment she held the lamp in aid of their

search.

"There is the revolver on the wall, and the gun is in the opposite corner. Isn't it strange you should be out in this country without arms?"

Keith glanced up, the revolver in his hands. The radiance of the light was full upon her face, revealing the clearness of her skin, the dark shadows of her lashes. There was the faintest tinge of suspicion to the question, but he answered easily.

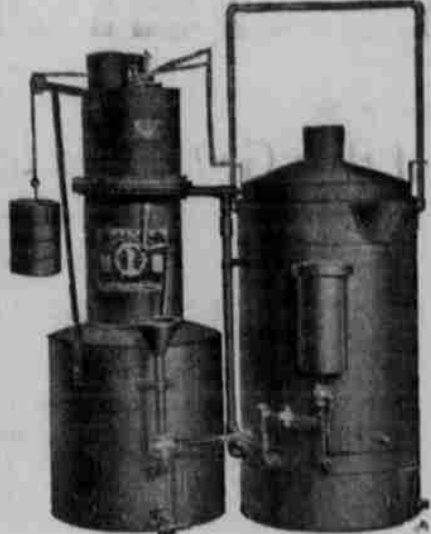
"We left Carson in something of a hurry. I'll tell you the story to-morrow."

(To Be Continued.)

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This style of lighting makes gas just as you use it at the jets or stove and no faster.

The entire machine is automatic in operation and requires no attention whatever except to occasionally put in carbide and water, and that takes only a few minutes of your time and will last from two to three weeks at one filling.

## JOHN BAUER,

Plattsmouth, Nebraska. THE HARDWARE MAN

### BAUER CONCERN GETS SOME BIG CONTRACTS

A \$2,000 Contract From the Krug People—Some Big Contracts From Out of Town, Too.

The John Bauer hardware, heating and plumbing firm has secured the contract for the heating, plumbing, wiring, gas-fitting and steel ceiling work in the Egenberger building at the northwest corner of Fifth and Main streets, which is owned by the Castle Realty company, a subsidiary company of the Krug Brewing company. The contract amounts to between \$2,000 and \$3,000.

The Bauer firm has just completed a new hot water heating plant for James Sage; a hot air plant for Mrs. J. T. Baird, and a heating plant complete and a bathroom outfit for Julius Buck, a son of John Buck, at Newcastle, Wyo.

Another big contract is the installation of a Campbell heating system at Nebraska City.

Plattsmouth people will be glad to know that this firm is extending its operations and is getting much outside business. It is often the little concerns that grow into the big ones, and the success of the Bauer company indicates a continued healthy growth for it.

### NEW TRIMMER ARRIVES MONDAY

Arrangements Being Made for Big Millinery Opening at the Department Store.

The new gentleman trimmer will arrive at the Department Store of M. Fanger Monday morning to take charge of the millinery department of this popular place. He comes direct from the big eastern markets, where he has secured everything that is new and stylish in the line of ladies' headgear.

The millinery opening will be announced within the next few days, the exact date of which has not yet been set. Watch for it; the opening announcement means everything that is new and stylish. Mr. Zucker has made a very heavy purchase in the millinery line for this season and is going to exert every effort to secure your patronage in this line. If the latest styles, newest line of goods, and the right prices will get it, he does not fear the results. Watch for the opening date.

"The Wolf," a story dealing with the picturesque and wild Hudson bay country, was first produced in New York at the Lyric theater, where it remained for six months. "The Wolf" then moved to Chicago, where it played for four months more. Manager Dunbar will offer it as the attraction at the Parmele theater next Saturday, September 16, with the same big production and an excellent cast.

Mrs. Mary K. Munn and Miss Alice Woodworth, who have been guests of the C. C. Parmele home, returned to Omaha this morning. They were accompanied by Miss Ellen Pollock and Miss Hallie Parmele.

### CIPHERING AND SPELLING CONTEST TO BE FEATURES OF SCHOOL WORK

County Superintendent Will Try to Have Contests Best in History of the Schools—Sends Out Letter of Instructions to Teachers Also Instructs Them as to Other Matters.

Miss Mary E. Foster, county superintendent of schools, has sent out a circular letter to teachers that will be of interest to school patrons generally. Miss Foster gives instructions in this letter for the county ciphering and spelling contests. These will be made an important feature of the school year; The superintendent's letter in part follows:

Dear Teacher:—Now that our schools are opened, I wish to make a few remarks in regard to the work for the year. We should begin at the first to make this the most successful year in school work in the history of our county. In order to do so we must work together, and we must ALL work. Plans for the reading circle and contest work will be sent to you within a few days.

Last year we held ciphering contests; this year we expect to do the same work, and we are also planning to conduct contests in spelling. You will be furnished one of the Crabtree Contest spellers, and you should have a copy of Milne's Mental arithmetic. You can secure the arithmetic by writing the American Book company at Chicago. The price of the book is 35 cents. All pupils from the sixth to the eighth grades inclusive will be requested to take part in the contest work. Please

do not consider that this work is intended only for other schools. You should require it in your school.

The rules in regard to the Reading circle will be more stringent than formerly. The negligence of a few teachers has compelled me to call attention to a new ruling made by the state superintendent in regard to the county superintendent's authority in regard to the work. The rule is that a county superintendent has a legal right to refuse to re-issue a certificate to a teacher who has failed to do the required Reading circle work. I hope that it will not be necessary to enforce this rule in Cass county.

Monthly reports to the county superintendent should be sent immediately at the close of the month. If they are not received in due time I shall notify your directions.

The quarterly test questions will be sent you at the end of each quarter. They are to be used by you for examination purposes. The papers are to be kept on file in your school for inspection by the parents and the county superintendent.

If you have not secured a copy of the Nebraska State Course of Study you should send to the office for one.

### The County Fair Crowds.

Once more the rolling year has brought us around to the cattle show season. It is customary for the Smart Alocks of the metropolitan press to rail at the rustic character of the people there assembled. The artist who covers the "cattle show" fails of editorial commendation unless the farmers are depicted with bushy hair and superfluous whiskers, and the women are set forth with hoop skirts and floppy bonnets. No doubt the artists who cover these events never get any nearer the scene than the golf clubs, just outside the city limits. For their benefit we might inform them that you can see some pretty good styles at the modern county fair. Occasionally there are traces of whiskers, but no more so than you can see on Broadway.

As for the women, how they have spruced up since fashion cuts began to circulate about the country. It takes a lot of presence to run a grange meeting, and country women oftentimes look a good deal smarter than the suffragette element you get in the women's clubs about the big cities. As for the up-to-date country girl, there isn't a finer feminine specimen afoot. She has gone just far enough in the world to know what good clothes can do for her, and not so far as to imagine that the paint brush is mightier than rosy human flesh and blood.

Mrs. Simon Hansen went to Omaha this morning to spend the day.

### Necessity of Food.

Food is a medicine you can always depend on. As soon as you will make the patient to accept and thoroughly digest a sufficient amount of nutritious food, his sickness will disappear and his strength will speedily return. This makes feeding one of the first requirements of a successful appetite. Triner's American Elixir of Bitter Wine stands in the front rank. It cleans out the system, stimulates it to work and strengthens it to stand the work. The body will then gladly accept enough food and transform it into new, rich blood which will distribute nourishment to every particle of the body. Indigestion, nervousness, headache, pain in the stomach or the bowels, constipation with all its unpleasant consequences, disturbed sleep, paleness, loss of energy, will quickly yield to this remedy, which consists of pure, red wine and medicinal herbs. At drug stores, Jos. Triner, 1333-1339 So. Ashland Ave., Chicago, Ill.

J. R. Whitney and O. A. Kantnor started out yesterday with a chauffeur to take an automobile ride from Mason City, Iowa, to Kansas City. They abandoned the trip here because of the muddy roads.

W. N. Baird, who is employed in the leading bank at Calida, Colorado, arrived in this city this morning for a few weeks' visit with his mother, Mrs. J. T. Baird and sisters.