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Vivid Imagination.

"Duffins says a pill looks as large to him as a golf ball."

"That being the case, I don't see how he ever manages to eat green peas."

Papa's Past.

Little Helen's mamma was discussing the drink question with a visitor and the child listened gravely to the conversation.

"Papa used to drink," she volunteered suddenly.

The visitor turned her head to conceal a smile, and mamma frowned and shook her head at the little one.

"Well, then," demanded Helen, "what was it he used to do?"—Lippincott's Magazine.

Fortissimo.

When a certain Baltimore matron returned home one afternoon not so long ago the first sight her eyes beheld was a badly damaged youngster of hers. Little Bobby's forehead bore a bump almost the size of a doorknob.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the mother. "What has happened to Bobby?"

"Nuthin' much, mum," explained the new nurse. "You told me, mum, he might play on the planner if he wanted to. Well, mum, wanst while he was sliding on the top, he slid a bit too far, mum; an' that accounts for the bump ye see, mum."

A WOMAN DOCTOR
Was Quick to See That Coffee Poison Was Doing the Mischief.

A lady tells of a bad case of coffee poisoning, and tells it in a way so simple and straightforward that literary skill could not improve it.

"I had neuralgic headaches for 12 years," she says, "and have suffered untold agony. When I first began to have them I weighed 140 pounds, but they brought me down to 110.

"I went to many doctors and they gave me only temporary relief. So I suffered on, till one day, a woman doctor advised me to drink Postum. She said I looked like I was coffee poisoned.

"So I began to drink Postum, and gained 15 pounds in the first few weeks and am still gaining, but not so fast as at first. My headaches began to leave me after I had used Postum about two weeks—long enough, I expect, to get the coffee poison out of my system.

"Now that a few months have passed since I began to use Postum, I can gladly say that I never know what a neuralgic headache is like any more, and it was nothing but Postum that relieved me.

"Before I used Postum I never went out alone; I would get bewildered and would not know which way to turn. Now I go alone and my head is as clear as a bell. My brain and nerves are stronger than they have been for years." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

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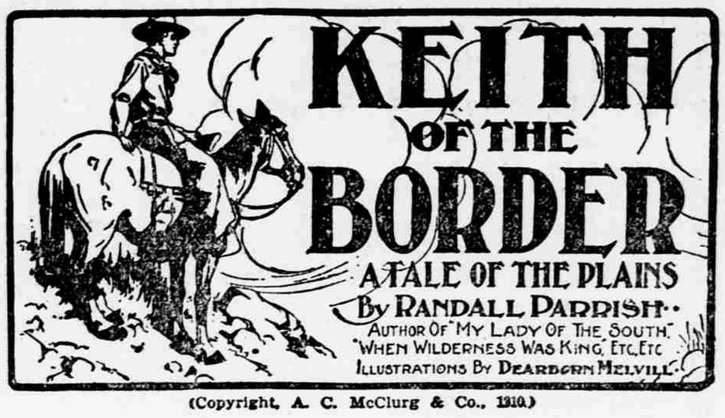

KEITH OF THE BORDER

A TALE OF THE PLAINS

By RANDALL PARRISH

Author of "My Lady of the South," "When Wilderness Was King," Etc., Etc.

Illustrations By Dearborn Melvill.

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SYNOPSIS.

Jack Keith, a Virginian, now a border plainsman, is looking for roaming war parties of savages. He sees a wagon team at full gallop pursued by men on ponies. When Keith reaches the wagon the raiders have massacred two men and departed. He searches the victims finding papers and a locket with a woman's portrait. Keith is arrested at Carson City, charged with the murder, his accuser being a ruffian named Black Bart. A negro companion in his cell named Neb tells him that he knew the Keiths in Virginia. Neb says one of the murdered men was John Sibley, the other Gen. Willis Waite, formerly a Confederate officer. The plainsman and Neb escape, and later the fugitives come upon a cabin and find its occupant to be a young girl, whom Keith thinks he saw at Carson City. The girl explains that she is in search of a brother, who had deserted from the army, and that a Mr. Hawley induced her to come to the cabin while he sought her brother. Hawley appears, and Keith in hiding recognizes him as Black Bart. There is a terrific battle in the darkened room in which Keith is victor. Horses are appropriated, and the girl who says that her name is Hope, joins in the escape. Keith explains his situation and the fugitives make for Fort Larned, where the girl is left with the hotel landlady. Miss Hope tells that she is the daughter of General Waite. Keith and Neb drift into Sheridan, where Keith meets an old friend, Dr. Fairbain. Keith meets the brother of Hope Waite, under the assumed name of Fred Willoughby, and becomes convinced that Black Bart has some plot involving the two. Hope learns that Gen. Waite, who was thought murdered, is at Sheridan, and goes there, where she is mistaken for Christie Maclaire, the Carson City singer. Keith meets the real Christie Maclaire and finds that Black Bart has convinced her that there is a mystery in her life which he is going to turn to her advantage. The plainsman tells Hope Waite of her resemblance to Christie Maclaire. They decide that Fred Willoughby may hold the key to the situation. Keith finds Willoughby shot dead. Hope is told of the death of her brother. Keith fails to learn what representations Black Bart has made to Christie Maclaire. Hope suggests that in order to learn the secret she must briefly impersonate the stage singer. Dr. Fairbain is in love with Christie Maclaire.

CHAPTER—XXVIII.—(Continued.)

Keith drew aside the flap of the tent to glance without, the light falling on Fairbain's face as he struggled to a sitting posture. He had had a new thought driven into him, yet failed to entirely grasp its significance.

"But, Jack," he asked, still half angry, "how about the girl? Hasn't she any right to this money?"

"I don't know," honestly, "we don't any of us know, but whatever she has the right to she is going to get. You can bet on that, old man. We're bucking Hawley, not Christie Maclaire—get that into your head. He hasn't any right, that's certain, for he murdered and stole to get the papers—be quiet! Here the fellow comes now!"

They peered out together through the convenient tent flap, Fairbain scarcely less interested than the other, already dimly comprehending that his truly dangerous rival was the gambler, and that he could best serve the lady by helping to prove to her the real character of that individual. He was still blindly groping in the haze, yet out of Keith's sharp, stinging words there had come to him a guiding light. The latter gripped his arm in restraint.

"Easy, old man, easy—let him pass."

Hawley turned into the alley whistling, evidently well pleased with the situation and anticipating other delights awaiting his coming. The glow of the Trocadero's lights served, an instant, to reveal his face, shaded by the broad brim of his hat, and then he vanished into the dark. Keith leaning far out, yet keeping well within the shadows, heard the faint creak of the vestibule door and the soft murmur of distant voices. Then he drew back suddenly, his hand again grasping Fairbain. Two figures—those of a man and woman—emerged into the dim light, and as quickly disappeared. Apparently her hand was upon his arm, and he was bending down so as to gain a glimpse of the face partially concealed by the folds of the mantilla. Only a word or two reached them, a little laugh, and the woman's voice:

"Why, of course I hurried! you said you had something of such importance to tell me."

"Fairbain," spoke Keith, his lips almost at the ear of the other. "That was Hope, all right, and she has got him going already. Now, man, will you help us out?"

"I? How?"

"Go back there, and meet Miss Maclaire. I don't care where you take her—lunch, anywhere; only keep her from the hotel as long as possible. You can do it far better than I, for she will not suspect you of any interest in this affair. Tell her any lie you can think up on account of Hawley's absence. Good Lord, old man, can't you see this is your chance; go in and win."

Fairbain struggled to his feet, still a bit dazed and uncertain, yet tempted by the opportunity.

"You're perfectly sure, Keith, this isn't anything that will hurt the girl?"

"Sure! Of course I am. It's just Hawley I'm gunning after. For God's, sake, haven't you got that clear yet?"

"I—I reckon I'm an old fool, Jack," admitted the Doctor regretfully, "and when an old fool is in love he hasn't got any sense left. Anyhow I'll do what you want me to now. Where are you going?"

"To watch those others. There is no knowing what play Hawley might try to pull off, and I want to keep within gun-shot of him. Hurry up, man; that vestibule door creaked just then."

He shoved him down the dark alley and dodged back himself across the front of the tent out into the street. There was a crowd of men in front of the Trocadero, but the couple he sought were nowhere in sight.

CHAPTER XXIX.

By Force of Arms.

With her heart throbbing fiercely, Hope clung to the outer door of the vestibule endeavoring to see a little of what was transpiring without. About her was dense darkness, and she dare not explore the surroundings. Behind could be heard, through what must have been a thin partition, the various distractions of the stage, shifting scenery, music, shuffling feet, voices, and the occasional sound of applause. The girl had nerved herself to the encounter with Hawley, but this waiting here in darkness and uncertainty tried her to the uttermost. If some one should venture out that way how could she excuse her presence or explain her purpose? She found herself trembling in every limb from nervous fear, startled by every strange sound. Would the man never come? Surely Christie herself must be ready to depart by this time.

Almost prepared to flee before the terrors thus conjured up within her mind, they left her as if by magic the moment her straining eyes distinguished the approach of a dim figure without. She could not tell who it was, only that it was the unmistakable form of a man, and that he was whistling softly to himself. It might not prove to be the gambler, but she must accept the chance, for flesh and blood could stand the strain of waiting no longer. Yet she was not conscious of fear, only of exultation, as she stepped forth into the open, her blood again circulating freely in her veins. At the slight creak of the door the man saw her, his whistle ceasing, his hat lifted. Instantly she recognized him as Hawley, her heart leaping with the excitement of encounter.

"Why, hullo, Christie," he said familiarly, "I thought I was early, and expected a ten minutes' wait. I came out as soon as you left the stage."

"Oh, I can dress in a jiffy when there is any cause for hurry," Hope responded, permitting herself to drift under his guidance. "Are you disappointed? Would you prefer to commune with nature?"

"Well, I should say not," drawing her hand through his arm, and then patting it with his own. "I have seen about all I care to of nature, but not of Christie Maclaire."

"You may learn to feel the same regarding her," Hope answered, afraid to encourage the man, yet eagerly fearful lest she fail to play her part aright.

"Not the slightest danger," laughing lightly, and pressing her arm more closely against his body. "Although I must confess you exhibited some temper when I was late to-night."

"Did I not have occasion to? A woman should never be kept waiting, especially if her engagement be imperative."

"Oh, I am not finding any fault, you little spit-fire. I like you all the better because you fight. But the trouble was, Christie, you simply jumped on me without even asking how it occurred. You took it for granted I was late on purpose to spite you."

"Well, weren't you?" and the girl glanced inquiringly up into his face, as they passed out of the alley into the light of the Trocadero's windows. "You certainly acted that way."

"No, I did not; but you wouldn't listen, and besides I had no time then to explain. There's a lot happened this afternoon I want to tell you about. Will you give me time to talk with you?"

"Why, of course," surprised at the question, yet full of eagerness. "Why should you ask that?"

"Because I want you alone where no one can overhear a syllable. I'm afraid of that damned hotel. You never know who is in the next room, and the slightest whisper travels from one end to the other. That is one way in which Keith got onto our deal—he had a room next to Willoughby and Scott, and overheard them talking. I'm not going to take any more chances. Will you go to 'Sheeny Joe's' with me?"

She drew back from him.

"'Sheeny Joe's?' You mean the saloon near the depot?"

"Sure; what's the use of being so squeamish? You sing and dance to a saloon crowd, don't you? Oh, I know you're a good girl, Christie, and all that. I'm not ranking you with these fly-by-nights around here. But there's no reason that I can see why you should shy so at a saloon. Besides, you won't see any one. Joe has got some back room where we can be alone, and have a bite to eat while we're talking. What do you say?"

"Oh, I would rather not," Hope faltered, bewildered by this unexpected request, already half-tempted to break away and run. "Really I—I don't want to go there."

Hawley was evidently surprise at this refusal, naturally supposing from her life that Miss Maclaire's scruples would be easily overcome. This obstinacy of the girl aroused his anger.

"You women beat the devil," he ejaculated, gruffly, "pretending to be so damn particular. Maybe you'd rather stand out there on the prairie and talk?" with a sweep of his hand around the horizon.

"Yes, I would," catching desperately at the straw. "I'm not afraid of you; I'm not blaming you at all, only I—I don't want to go to 'Sheeny Joe's.'"

He looked at her, puzzled at her attitude, and yet somewhat reassured by her expression of confidence. Oh, well, what was the difference? It might be better to let her have her own way, and the change would not materially interfere with his plans. Of course, it would be pleasanter sitting together at one of Joe's tables, but he could talk just as freely out yonder under the stars. Besides, it might be as well now to humor the girl.

"All right, Christie," his voice regaining its pleasant tone. "You shall have your way this time. There is too much at stake for us to quarrel over this."

Frightened, yet not daring to resist or exhibit the least reluctance, she clung to his arm, and permitted him to lead her to the right down a dark passage and out into the open land beyond. He had to feel his way carefully, and scarcely spoke, yet proceeded as though the passage was reasonably familiar and he had some definite point in view. She answered in monosyllables, now thoroughly regretful of having permitted herself to drift into this position, yet not in the least knowing how to extricate herself. Hawley took everything for granted, her very silence convincing him of her acquiescence. With throbbing pulse, Hope felt the small revolver hidden within her dress, undoing a button so that, in emergency, she might grasp it more quickly. Hawley felt the movement, the trembling of her arm.

Mad With Terror, She Pulled the Trigger.

"You are afraid, just the same," he said, pressing her to him lover-like. "Darkness always gets on a woman's nerves."

"Yes, that and loneliness," resenting his familiarity. "Do we need to go any farther? Surely, we are alone here."

"Only a few steps; the ravine is yonder, and we can sit down on the rocks. I want to smoke, and we will be entirely out of sight there."

He helped her down the rather sharp declivity until both were thoroughly concealed below the prairie level. Feeling about with his hands he found the surface of a smooth rock, and seated her upon it. Then a match flared, casting an instant's gleam across his face as he lighted his cigar. Blacker than ever the night shut down about them, and he groped for a seat beside her. She could perceive just one star peering through a rift of cloud, and in her nostrils was the pungent odor of tobacco. With a little shiver of disgust she drew slightly away from him, dreading what was to come. One thing alone she felt was in her favor—However familiar Hawley attempted to be, he was evidently not yet sufficiently sure of Miss Maclaire to become entirely offensive.

"I reckon, Christie," he said slowly, between puffs on his cigar, the lighted end of which faintly illumined his face, "you've got the idea I have brought you out here to make love. Lord knows I'd like to well enough, but just now there's more important matters on hand. Fact is, my girl, we're up against a little back-set, and have got to make a shift in our plans—a mighty quick shift, too," he added, almost savagely.

"I—I don't think I understand."

"No, of course, you don't. You imagine all we've got to do in a matter of this kind is to step into the nearest court, and draw the money. One trouble is, our evidence isn't complete—we've got to find that woman who brought you up."

"Oh!" said Hope, not knowing what else to say.

"Yes," he went on, apparently satisfied with her exclamation. "Of course, I know she's dead, or at least, you say so, but we haven't got enough proof without her—not the way old Waite promises to fight your claim—and so we've got to hunt for a substitute. Do you happen to know any old woman about the right age who would make affidavit for you? She probably wouldn't have to go on the stand at all. Waite will cave in as soon as he knows we've got the evidence."

He waited for an answer, but she hardly knew what to say. Then she remembered that Keith insisted that Miss Maclaire had no conception that there was any fraud in her claim.

"No, I know no one. But what do you mean? I thought everything was straight? That there was no question about my right to inherit?"

"Well, there isn't, Christie," pulling fiercely on his cigar. "But the courts are particular; they have got to have the whole thing in black and white. I thought all along I could settle the entire matter with Waite outside, but the old fool won't listen to reason. I saw him twice to-day."

"Twice?" Surprise wrung the word from her.

"Yes; thought I had got him off on a false scent and out of the way, the first time, but he turned up again like a bad penny. What's worse, he's evidently stumbled on to a bit of legal information which makes it safer for us to disappear until we can get the links of our chain forged. He's taken the case into court already, and the sheriff is here tryin' to find me so as to serve the papers. I've got to skip out, and so've you."

"I?" rising to her feet, indignantly. "What have I done to be frightened over?"

He laughed, but not pleasantly.

"Oh, hell, Christie, can't you understand? Old Waite is after you the same way he is me. It'll knock our whole case if he can get you into court before our evidence is ready. All you know is what I have told you—that's straight enough—but we've got to have proof. I can get it in a month, but he's got hold of something which gives him a leverage. I don't know what it is—maybe it's just a bluff—but the charge is conspiracy, and he's got warrants out. There is nothing for us to do but skip."

"But my clothes; my engagement?" she urged, feeling the insistent earnestness of the man, and sparring for delay. "Why, I cannot go. Besides, if the sheriff is hunting us, the trains will be watched."

"Do you suppose I am fool enough to risk the trains?" he exclaimed, roughly, plainly losing patience. "Not much; horses and the open plains for us, and a good night the start of them. They will search for me first, and you'll never be missed until you fail to show up at the Troadero. Never mind the clothes; they can be sent after us."

"To-night!" she cried, awakening to the immediate danger, and rising to her feet. "You urge me to fly with you to-night?—now?"

"Sure, don't be foolish and kick up a row. The horses are here waiting just around the end of the ravine."

She pressed her hands to her breast, shrinking away from him.

"No! No! I will not go!" she declared, indignantly. "Keep back! Don't touch me!"

Hawley must have expected the resistance, for with a single movement he grasped her even as she turned to fly, pinning her arms helplessly to her side, holding her as in a vise.

"Oh, but you will, my beauty," he growled. "I thought you might act up and I'm ready. Do you think I am fool enough to leave you here alone to be pumped dry? It is a big stake I'm playing after, girl, and I am not going to lose it through the whims of a woman. If you won't go pleasantly, then you'll go by force. Keep still, you tigress! Do you want me to choke you?"

She struggled to break loose, twisting and turning, but the effort was useless. Suddenly he whistled sharply. There was the sound of feet scrambling down the path, and the frightened woman perceived the dim outlines of several approaching men. She gave one scream, and Hawley released his grip on her arms to grasp her throat.

She jerked away, half-stumbling backward over a rock. The revolver, carried concealed in her dress, was in her hand. Mad with terror, scarcely knowing what she did, she pulled the trigger. In the flash she saw one man throw up his hands and go down. The next instant the others were upon her.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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