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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.

CHAPTER XXII.—(Contoinued.)

"Miss Maclaire," he said, pleasantly, "I trust you will pardon all that has occurred between us, and permit me to explain."

"I—I do not understand," she replied, puzzled by these unexpected words. "There has nothing occurred between us, I am sure, which requires explanation. Have we met before?"

The man smiled. Seeing the woman's face in the shadows he was still convinced she was the same he had last parted with on the Salt Fork. However, if she preferred to ignore all that, and begin their relations anew, it was greatly to his liking. It gave him insight into her character, and fresh confidence that he could gain her assistance. Anyhow, he was ready enough to play her game.

"Let us assume not," just the slightest trace of mockery in the tone, "and begin anew. At least, you will confess the receipt of my letters—I am Bartlett Hawley."

She cast a half-frightened glance toward Keith, and the man, following the direction of her eyes, perceived the presence of the other. His right leg went backward, his hand dropping to the belt, his form stiffening erect. Keith's voice, low but clear in the silence, seemed to cut the air.

"Not a motion, Hawley! I have you covered."

"Oh, gentlemen, please don't!"

"Have no fear, Miss Maclaire; this man and I will settle our difference elsewhere, and not in your presence." He stepped forth into the middle of the room, revolver drawn, but held low at the hip, his watchful eyes never deserting the gambler's face.

"Back up against the wall, Hawley," he commanded. "I hardly need to tell you how I shoot, for we, at least, have met before. Now, I'm going out, and leave you to your interview with Miss Maclaire, and I wish you happiness and success."

He moved across to the opening, keeping his face toward his adversary; then backed out slowly, closed the door with a snap, and sprang aside to avoid any possibility of a bullet crashing after him. No sound of movement from within reached his ears, however, and he walked silently to the head of the stairs.

CHAPTER XXIII.

An Unexpected Meeting.

Keith paused at the landing, looking down into the deserted office, almost tempted to return and force Hawley into a confession of his purpose. It was easy for him to conceive what would be the final result of this interview between the artistic gambler and Miss Maclaire. In spite of the vague suspicion of evil which the plainsman had implanted within the woman's mind, the other possessed the advantage, and would certainly improve it. All conditions were decidedly in his favor. He merely needed to convince the girl that she was actually the party sought, and she would go forward, playing the game he desired, believing herself right, totally unconscious of any fraud. The very simplicity of it rendered the plot the more dangerous, the more difficult to expose. Hawley had surely been favored by fortune in discovering this singer who chanced to resemble Hope so remarkably, and who, at the same time, was in such ignorance as to her own parentage. She would be ready to grasp at a straw, and, once persuaded as to her identity and legal rights, could henceforth be trusted implicitly as an ally.

Realizing all this, and comprehending also how easily Hawley would win her confidence and overcome his warning by denouncing him as a fugitive from justice charged with murder, the temptation to return and fight it

"Was Your Call Upon Miss Maclaire Very Interesting?"

out then and there became almost overpowering. He had no fear of Hawley; indeed, physical fear had scarcely a place in his composition, but he was not as yet sufficiently fortified with facts for the seeking of such an encounter.

A man came in through the office, and began climbing the stairs. He was almost at the landing before Keith recognized him or the other glanced up.

"Ah—seen her, I suppose?"

"Yes," returned Keith, not thinking it worth while to mention the lady's denial of having sent for him. "I have just come from there."

"Hum—thought you'd be through by this time—fine looking girl, ain't she? —believe I'll run in and chat with her myself."

"I would advise you to select some other time, Doctor," said the younger, drily, "as the lady has a visitor at present."

"A visitor?" his face rosy, his shrewd eyes darkening. "Ah, indeed! Of the male sex?"

"I judge so—'Black Bart' Hawley."

"Good Lord!" so startled his voice broke. "Did he see you?"

"Rather; I backed him up against the wall with a gun while I made my adieu."

"But what brought him there? Are they acquainted?"

"Don't ask conundrums, Doctor. He may be your rival with the fair lady for all I know. If he is, my sympathies are all with you. Only I wouldn't try to see Miss Christie just now; I'd wait for a clearer field. Hawley is probably not in the best of humor."

Fairbain stared into the face of the speaker, uncertain whether or not he was being laughed at.

"Reckon you're right," he acknowledged at last. "Tired, anyhow—been out all night—thought I'd like to see her again, though—finest looking woman I've met since I came West—remarkable eyes—well, I'll go along to bed—see you again to-morrow, Jack."

Keith watched the sturdy figure stamp heavily down the hall-way, loose boards creaking under his positive tread, and smiled to himself at the thought that he might have, indeed, become truly interested in the music hall singer. Somehow, the doctor did not harmonize with the conception of love, or fit graciously into the picture. Still, stranger matings had occurred, and Cupid does not ask permission before he plays pranks with hearts. Keith turned again toward the stairs, only to observe a woman slowly cross the office and commence the ascent. She was in the shadow, her face even more deeply shaded by her hat, yet he stared at her in amazement—surely, it was Miss Maclaire! Yet how could it be? He had left that person scarcely five minutes before in "26," and this stairway was the only exit. His hand grasped the rail, his heart throbbing strangely, as a suspicion of the truth crossed his brain. Could this be Hope? Could it be that she was here also? As her foot touched the landing, she saw him, her eyes lighting up suddenly in recognition, a wave of color flooding her cheeks.

"Why, Captain Keith," she exclaimed, extending her gloved hand frankly, "you have been to my room, and were going away. I am so glad I came in time."

"I hardly thought to meet you," he replied, retaining her fingers in his grasp. "When did you reach Sheridan?"

"Only last night. I had no idea you were here until Doctor Fairbain chanced to mention your name. Then I at once begged him to tell you how exceedingly anxious I was to see you. You see, I was sure you would come if you only knew. I really thought you would be here this morning, and remained in my room waiting, but there were some things I actually had to have. I wasn't out ten minutes, so you mustn't think I sent you a message and then forgot."

The nature of the mistake was becoming apparent, and Keith's gray eyes smiled as they looked into the depths of the brown.

"Your message had rather an amusing result," he said, "as the doctor informed me that Miss Christie Maclaire was the one who desired my presence."

"Miss Maclaire!" her voice exhibiting startled surprise. "Why—why—oh, I did forget; I never told him differently. Why, it was most ridiculous." She laughed, white teeth gleaming between the parted red lips, yet not altogether happily. "Let me explain, Captain Keith, for really I have not been masquerading. Doctor Fairbain and I arrived upon the same train last evening. He is such a funny man, but was very nice, and offered to escort me to the hotel. I remember now that although he introduced himself, I never once thought to mention to him my name. The town was very rough last night—the company had paid off the graders I was told—and there was no carriage, so we were compelled to walk. I—I never saw such a mob of drunken men. One came reeling against me, and brushed aside my veil so as to see my face. The doctor struck him, and then the marshal came up—you know him, Bill Hickock—and the impudent fellow actually declared he knew me, that I was Christie Maclaire. I tried to explain, but they hurried me on through the crowd to the hotel, and I became confused, and forgot. Do you suppose they registered me by that name?"

"Quite likely; at least Fairbain still believes it was the Christie whom he so gallantly escorted last night."

"How provoking," her foot tapping the floor, a little wrinkle between her eyes. "It seems as though I couldn't escape that woman—does she—does she really look like me?"

"At a little distance, yes," he admitted, "her form and face resemble yours very closely, but her hair is darker, her eyes have a different expression, and she must be five or six years older."

"Do—do you know her well?"

"No, indeed; I have seen her several times on the stage, but never met her until a few moments ago."

"A few moments ago! Do you mean she is here in this hotel?"

"Yes, Miss Hope, and that was what made the mistake in names so laughable. Fairbain gave me your message, but as coming from Christie. I was, of course, greatly surprised, yet responded. The lady very promptly denied having sent for me, but as I was anxious to interview her myself, we managed to drift into conversation, and I must have passed a half hour there. I might have been there still, but for an interruption."

"Oh, indeed!" with rising inflection.

He glanced quickly about, reminded of the situation.

"Yes, Hawley came in, and I would prefer not to meet him here, or have him discover you were in Sheridan. Could we not go to your room? I have much to tell you."

Her questioning eyes left his face, and stared down over the rail. A heavily built man, with red moustache, leaned against the clerk's desk.

"Do you know that man?" she asked quickly. "He followed me all the time I was shopping. I—I believe he is the same one who jostled me in the crowd last night."

Keith leaned past her to get a better view, but the fellow turned, and slouched away.

"I only had a glimpse, but have no recollection of ever seeing him before. You heard no name?"

"'Wild Bill' called him either Scott, or Scotty—if this is the same man."

Keith's jaw set, the fighting light burning in his eyes. That was the name of the fellow rooming with Willoughby, the one who seemed to be Hawley's special assistant.

"A mere accident probably; but about my request? May I talk with you a few moments alone?"

She bowed, apparently still dissatisfied regarding his lengthy conversation with Christie, yet permitted him to follow down the hall. She held open the door of "15," and he entered silently, not wholly understanding the change in her manner. She stood before the dresser, drawing off her gloves and removing her hat.

"Will you be seated, Captain; the arm chair by the window is the more comfortable." She turned toward him, almost shyly, yet with womanly curiosity which would not be stilled. "Was your call upon Miss Maclaire very interesting? Did you admire her very much?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

His Efforts Unappreciated

Charles H. Sherrill, minister to the Argentine Republic, who has been in the United States telling business organizations about the opportunities to get wealthy from trade with South America, received a call from a middle-aged woman who approached him in a western city with the statement: "I am going to assist you in your work." "Yes?" said Mr. Sherrill. "I am going to take some of these lecture dates off your hands and give them myself. By the way, how much do you get a night for them?" Mr. Sherrill related with a directness which carried conviction that he did not get a red cent and paid his expenses besides. "Well," said the caller, in great anger, as she flounced to the door, "I thought you were a business man, but it seems that you are only doing a great injury to the lecture market in this section."

Her Way.

Mrs. Woggs—So you keep your husband home evenings? I suppose you put his slippers where he can find 'em?

Mrs. Boggs—No; I put his over shoes where he can't.—Puck.

Met His Match.

Alkali Ike—They have just taken Roaring Bill to the hospital.

Pistol Pete—What happened to him?

Alkali Ike—He tried to break up a suffragist meeting.—Judge.

JUST A LITTLE TOO HASTY

Mr. Newlywed Resented What He Considered Impertinence, but the Joke Was on Him.

They were on their wedding tour, and imagined that every civility given them related to their new condition of servitude.

Having stopped at a way station, the bridegroom was approached by the station agent, who asked:

"Are you going to take the next train?"

"It's none of your business," retorted the bridegroom, indignantly, as he guided the bride up the platform, where they condoled with each other over the impertinence of some of the natives.

Onward came the train, its vapor curling from afar. It was the last to their destination that day—an express. Nearer and nearer it came at full speed; then in a moment it whizzed past and was gone.

"Why in thunder didn't that train stop!" yelled the bridegroom.

"Cos you said 'twarn't none of my bizness. I has to signal if that train's to stop."

PIMPLES COVERED HIS BACK

"My troubles began along in the summer in the hottest weather and took the form of small eruptions and itching and a kind of smarting pain. It took me mostly all over my back and kept getting worse until finally my back was covered with a mass of pimples which would burn and itch at night so that I could hardly stand it. This condition kept getting worse and worse until my back was a solid mass of big sores which would break open and run. My underclothing would be a clot of blood.

"I tried various remedies and salves for nearly three years and I was not getting any benefit. It seemed I was in eternal misery and could not sleep on my back or lean on a chair. I was finally given a set of the Cuticura Remedies and inside of two weeks I could see and feel a great relief. I kept on using Cuticura Soap, Ointment and also the Resolvent, and in about three or four months' time my back was nearly cured and I felt like a new being. Now I am in good health and no sign of any skin diseases and I am fully satisfied that Cuticura Remedies are the best ever made for skin diseases. I would not be without them." (Signed) W. A. Armstrong, Corbin, Kan., May 26, 1911. Although Cuticura Soap and Ointment are sold by druggists and dealers everywhere, a sample of each, with 32-page book, will be mailed free on application to "Cuticura," Dept. L, Boston.

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Tatterdon Torn—Did she turn you down, or marry you?

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That is LAXATIVE BROMO QUININE. Look for the signature of E. W. GROVE. Used the World over to Cure a Cold in One Day. 25c.

All women love a lover—but most married men feel sorry for him.

Right in Her Line.

Gillet—The people in the flat above us are constantly fighting.

Perry—Doesn't your wife object?

Gillet—No. She likes to have a fuss made over her.

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Try Murine Eye Remedy. No Smarting—Feels Fine—Acts Quickly. Try it for Red, Weak, Watery Eyes and Granulated Eyelids. Illustrated Book in each Package. Murine is compounded by our Oculists—not a "Patent Medicine"—but used in successful Physicians' Practice for many years. Now dedicated to the Public and sold by Druggists at 25c and 50c per Bottle. Murine Eye Salve in Aseptic Tubes, 25c and 50c.
Murine Eye Remedy Co., Chicago

We are told that it is the unexpected that always happens. If this is true, we should learn to expect it.

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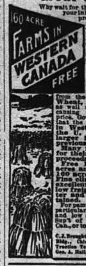

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For pamphlet "Last Best West," particulars as to suitable location and low settlers' rate, apply to Sup't of Immigration, Ottawa, Can., or to Canadian Gov't Agent.

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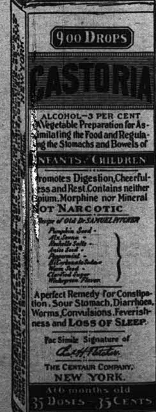

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