KEITH OF THE BORDER

A TALE OF THE PLAINS

By Randall Parrish

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Illustrations by Dearborn Melville

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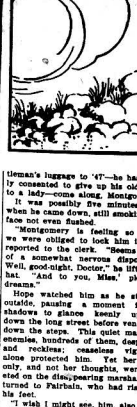

SYNOPSIS.

Jack Keith, a Virginian, now a border gladiator, is looking for massacred 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 one still living, a woman's body and a train Keith is arrested at Carson City, charged with the murder, his accuser being a ruffian named Black Bart. A respectable companion in his cell named Nob tells him that he knew the Keiths in Virginia. Nob says one of the murdered men was John Bibley, the other Gen. Willis Waite, formerly a Confederate officer. The plaintiff in the case is Hope Waite, who is found some upon a cabin and the fugitives prove 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 plain while he sought her brother. Hawley appears, and Keith in hiding recognizes Black Bart as Hawley's partner. A battle in the darkened room ensues, 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 officer's daughter. Miss Hope tells that her father is Gen. Willis Waite. When Keith meets an old friend, Tommy Plumer, 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 she thought murdered, is at Sheridan, and goes there, where she is mistaken for Christie Maclaire, the Carson City singer.

CHAPTER XXI.—(Continued.)

He shouldered his way through the collected crowd, the other following. Hope endeavored to speak, to explain to Fairbain who she actually was, realizing then, for the first time, that she had not previously given him her name. Amidst the incessant noise and confusion, the blaring of brass, and the jangle of voices, she found it impossible to make the man comprehend. She pressed closer to him, holding more tightly to his arm, stunned and confused by the fierce uproar. The stranger steadily pushing ahead of them, and opening a path for their passage, fascinated her, and her eyes watched him curiously. His name was an oddly familiar one, associated in some memory with some of the most desperate deeds ever witnessed in the West, yet always found on the side of law and order; it was so difficult to conceive that this quiet-spoken, mild-eyed, gently smiling man could indeed be the most famous gun fighter on the border, hated, feared, yet thoroughly respected, by every desperado between the Platte and the Canadian. Beyond the glare and glitter of the Metropolitan Dance Hall the noisy crowd thinned away somewhat, and the marshal ventured to drop back beside Fairbain, yet vigilantly watched every approaching face.

"Town appears unusually lively to-night, Bill," observed the latter gravely, "and the boys have got an early start."

"West end graders just paid off," was the reply. "They have been whoopin' it up ever since noon, and are beginning to get ugly. Now the rest of the outfit are showing up, and there will probably be something interesting happening before morning. Wouldn't mind it so much if I had a single deputy worth his salt."

"What's the matter with Bain?"

"Nothing, while he was on the job, but 'Red' Haggerty got him in 'Pony Joe's' shebang two hours ago; shot him in the back across the bar. Ned never even pulled his gun."

"I'm sorry to hear that; what became of Haggerty?"

The marshal let his eyes rest questionably on the doctor's face for an instant.

"Well, I happened to be just behind Ned when he went," he said keatly, "and 'Red' will be buried on 'Boot Hill' to-morrow. I'm afraid I don't give you much chance to show your skill, Doc," with a smile.

"If they all shot like you do, my profession would be useless. What's the matter with your other deputies?"

"Lack of nerve, principally, I reckon; ain't one of 'em worth the powder to blow him up. I'd give something just now for a fellow I had down at Dodge—he was a man. Never had to tell him when to go in; good judgment too; wasn't out hunting for trouble, but always ready enough to take his share. Old soldier in our army, Captain, I heard, though he never talked much about himself; maybe you knew him—Jack Keith."

"Well, I reckon," in quick surprise, "and 'what's more to the point, he's here—slept in my room last night."

"Keith here! in Sheridan! And hasn't even hunted up my pal? That's like him, all right, but I honestly want to see the boy. Here's your hotel. Shall you need me any longer?"

"Better step in with us, Bill," the doctor advised, "your influence last night aid in procuring the lady a decent room."

"I reckon it might."

They passed together up the three rickety steps leading into the front hall, which latter opened directly into the cramped office; to the left was the wide-open bar-room, clamorous and disorderly with the noisy crowd, packed close against the wall, with a scattering half dozen men lounging upon it. The marshal rested there, and with a "Wait here with the lady, Fairbain," he said shortly, "and I'll arrange for the room."

They watched him glance in at the bar, vigilant and cautious, and then move directly across to the desk.

"Tommy," he said gentlely to the clerk, "I've just escorted a lady here from the train—Miss Maclaire—and want you to give her the best room in your old shebang."

The other looked at him doubtfully.

"Well, Bill, I don't know how I'm going to do that," he acknowledged. "She wrote in here to the boss for a room; said she'd be along yesterday. Well, she didn't show up, an' so tonight we let a fellow have it. He's up there now."

"Well, he'll have to vamose—who is he?"

"Englishman—Walter Spottswood Montgomery," consulting his book. "Hail of a pompous duck; the boys call him 'John Montgomery.'"

"All right; send some one up to rout his lordship out lively."

Tommy shuffled his feet, and looked again at the marshal; he had received positive orders about that room, and was fully convinced that Montgomery would not take kindly to eviction. But Hickock's quiet gray eyes were insistent.

"Here, 'Red,'" he finally called to the burly porter, "hustle up to '15,' an' tell that fellow Montgomery he's got to get out; tell him we want the room for a lady."

Hickock watched the man disappear up the stairs, helped himself carefully to a cigar out of the stand, tossing a coin to the clerk and then deliberately lighting up.

"Think Montgomery will be pleased?" he asked shortly.

"No; he'll probably throw 'Red' down stairs."

The marshal smiled; his glance turning expectantly in that direction.

"Then perhaps I had better remain, Tommy." And he strolled nonchalantly over to the open window, and stood there looking quietly out, a spiral of blue smoke rising from his cigar.

They could distinctly hear the pounding on the door above, and occasionally the sound of the porter's voice, but the straight, erect figure at the window remained motionless. Finally "Red" came down, nursing his knuckles.

"Say he'll be damned if he will—says he's gone to bed, an' that there ain't a cussed female in this blasted country he'd git up for," he reported circumstantially to the clerk. "He told me to tell you to go plumb to hell, an' that if any one else come poundin' 'round that to-night, he'd take a pot shot at 'em through the door. 'Fifteen' seemed a bit peeylah, sir, an' I reckoned if he was riled up more, he might git rambunctious; his language was sure fierce."

"Wild Bill" turned slowly around, still calmly smoking, his eyes exhibiting some interest.

"Did you clearly inform Mr.—ah—Montgomery that we desired the room for the use of a lady?" he questioned gently, apparently both pained and shocked.

"I did, sir."

"It surprises me to find one in our city with so little regard for the ordinary courtesies of life, Tommy. Perhaps I can persuade the gentleman."

He disappeared up the stairs, taking them deliberately step by step, the cigar still smoking between his lips. "Red" called after him.

"Keep away from in front of the door, Bill; he'll shoot sure, for he cocked his gun when I was up there."

Hickock glanced back, waved his hand.

"Don't worry—the room occupied by Mr.—ah—Montgomery was '15,' I believe you said?"

Whatever occurred above, it was over with very shortly. Those listening at the foot of the stairs heard the first gentle rap on the door, an outburst of profanity, followed almost instantly by a sharp snap, as a lock had given way, then brief silence mingled with the loud creaking of a bed. Scarcely a minute later the marshal appeared on the landing above, one hand firmly gripped in the neck-band of an undershirt, thus securely holding the writhing, helpless figure of a man, who swore violently every time he could catch his breath.

"Any other room you could conveniently assign Mr.—ah—Montgomery to, Tommy?" he asked pleasantly. "If he doesn't like it in the morning, he could be changed, you know."

"Give—give him '42.'"

"All right. I'm the bell-boy temporarily, Montgomery; easy now, my man, easy, or I'll be compelled to use both hands, 'Red,' carry the gentleman's luggage to '47'—he has kindly consented to give up his old room to a lady—come along, Montgomery."

It was possibly five minutes later when he came down, still smoking, his face not even flushed.

"Montgomery is feeling so badly we were obliged to lock him in," he reported to the clerk. "Seems to be of a somewhat nervous disposition. Well, good-night, Doctor," he lifted his hat. "And to you, Miss, pleasant dreams."

Hope watched him as he stepped outside, pausing a moment in the shadows to glance keenly up and down the long street before venturing down the steps. This quiet man had enemies, hundreds of them, desperate and reckless; ceaseless vigilance alone protected him. Yet her eyes only, and not her thoughts, were riveted on the disappearing marshal. She turned to Fairbain, who had risen in his feet.

"I wish I might see, him, also," she said, as though continuing an interrupted conversation.

"See him? Who?"

"Mr. Keith. I—I knew him once and—and, Doctor, won't you tell him I should like to have him come and see me just—just as soon as he can."

CHAPTER XXII.

An Interrupted Interview.

Miss Christie Maclaire, attired in a soft lounging robe, her luxuriant hair wound simply about her head, forming a decidedly attractive picture, gazed with manifest dissatisfaction on the bare walls of her room, and then out through the open window into the comparative quiet street below. The bar-tender at the "Palace," directly opposite, business being slack, was leaning negligently in the doorway. His roving eyes caught the fair face framed in the window, and he waved his hand encouragingly. Miss Christie's brown eyes stared across at him in silent disgust, and then wandered again about the room, her foot tapping nervously on the rag carpet.

"It's my very last trip to this town," she said decisively, her red lips pressed tightly together.

Miss Maclaire had indeed ample reason to feel aggrieved over her reception. She had written to have the best apartment in the house reserved for her, and then, merely because she had later been invited out to Fort Hays, and was consequently a day behind in arrival, had discovered that another woman—a base imposter, actually masquerading under her name—had been duly installed in the coveted apartment. Driving in from the fort that morning, accompanied by two of the more susceptible junior officers, conscious that she had performed most artistic work the evening before in the spacious mess-hall, and feeling confident of comfortable apartments awaiting her, it had been something of a shock to be informed by the perturbed clerk that "15" was already occupied by another. "A lady what come in last night, and I naturally supposed it was you."

In vain Miss Maclaire protested, ably backed by the worshiful officers who still gallantly attended her; the management was obdurate. Then she would go up herself, and throw the hussy out. Indeed, too angry for bantering further words, Christie had actually started for the stairs, intending to execute her threat, when the perspiring Tommy succeeded in stopping her by plainly blurting out the exact truth.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Any Other Room You Could Conveniently Assign Mr.—ah—Montgomery to, Tommy?"

Uplift in Russia.

Even the submerged Russians are lifting their heads to the better fruits of the industries of civilization. In fifteen years savings banks' deposits have risen from $235,000,000 to $650,000,000. Little by little, too, the Russian books, which had been sold abroad, are flowing back to the subjects of the czar.

HOT DRINKS such as I serve warm and cheer you these cold days.

F. O. STONE

I Cater To Particular People

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If you have any old or young mares and horses, any size, any condition, am paying highest prices. Am shipping to Memphis, Tenn. Bring to Barrington, Schwemm's livery barn, Friday, January 26, 1912, and receive an honest deal. Don't forget the day.

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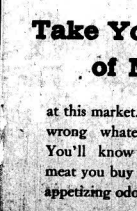
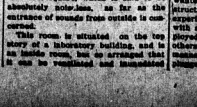


Take Your Choice of Meats

at this market. You cannot go wrong whatever you select. You'll know that when the meat you buy sends forth it's appetizing odor.

Alverson & Groff



Room That is Sound-Proof

Remarkable Chamber at University of Utrecht That Was Constructed for Scientific Experiments.

The Physiological institute of the University of Utrecht possesses one of the most remarkable rooms in the world, a chamber about seven and a half feet square, which is said to be absolutely noiseless, as far as the entrance of sounds from outside is concerned.

This room is situated on the top story of a laboratory building, and is so constructed that no sound can get in or be transmitted and immediately with sunshine. The walls, floors and ceiling each consist of three alternate layers of different substances, with air spaces and interstices filled with sound-deadening materials.

Some persons when in the room experience a peculiar sensation in the ears. While every effort has been made to exclude sounds that are not wanted, of course the object of constructing this singular room was to experiment with phenomena connected with sound. Some of the sounds, certainly are made in the room itself, others are introduced from outside by means of a copper tube, which is plunged into the ground.