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 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 nerve 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 his 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 and Keith induces him to detain her from the stage while Hope goes to the theater where she meets Black Bart, who, thus deceived, tells Hope that General Waite has suspected his plans and that they must fly. Hope, greatly alarmed, detours General Waite appears and says Black Bart has stolen papers from him regarding an inheritance. Keith is informed that Christie Maclaire's real name is Phyllis Gale and that she is the half sister of Hope. The latter has been carried away by Black Bart and his gang. Dr. Fairbain avows his love for Phyllis and she accepts him. Keith and his friends strike the trail of Black Bart. They find Hope has been taken back to the old cabin. The wilderness cabin is the scene of a fight in which Outlow enemies.

CHAPTER XXXV.—(Continued.)

"It's the Indian," he said grimly. "Sanches must 'a' mistook him for one of us, and shot the poor devil."

And Sanches himself is out yonder on that sand-pit," and Keith pointed; then lifted his voice to make it carry across the stream. "Come on over, Doctor, you and Neb. We've got the gang. Bring that body out there along with you."

The "Bar X" man waded out to help, and the three together laid the dead Mexican-outlaw on the bank, beside the Indian he had shot down in his effort to escape. Keith stood for a moment bending low to look curiously into the dead face—wrinkled, scarred, still, featuring cruelty, the thin lips drawn back in a snarl. What scenes of horror those eyes had gazed upon during fifty years of crime; what suffering of men, women, children; what deeds of rapine; what examples of merciless hate. Juan Sanches!—the very sound of the name made the blood run cold. "Dead or alive!" Well, they had him at last—dead; and the plainsman shuddered, as he turned away.

Taking Fairbain with him and hastily reviewing late occurrences to him, Keith crossed over to the corral, realizing that their work—his work—was not wholly done until Hawley had been located. With this quest in mind he strode straight to the black-bearded giant who had guarded Hope from Sheridan.

"What is your name?" he asked sharply.

The man looked up scowling.

"Hatchett," he answered gruffly.

"Well, Hatchett, I am going to ask you a question or two, and you'd better to reply just about as straight as you know how. I am in no mood to-night for any foolishness. Where is 'Black Bart' Hawley?"

"How in Jell should I know?"

"You do know, just the same. Perhaps not to an inch, or a mile, but you know enough to know where he is, and where he has been since you left Sheridan."

"If I do, I'm damned if I'll tell you."

"No? Well now, Hatchett, listen to me," and Keith's voice had in it the click of a steel trap. "You'll either answer me straight, or we'll hang you to that cottonwood in about five minutes. If you want a chance for your miserable life you answer me. We have our way of treating your kind out in this country. Sit up, you brute! Now where did Hawley go after he left you?"

"To Fort Larned."

"After these fresh horses?"

"Yes."

"He didn't bring them to you; I know that. Where has he been since?"

"Damn Fort Leavenworth."

"How do you know?"

"He told me a week the man before he left."

"Did it you."

Keith took the dirty bits of paper the man reluctantly extracted from his shirt, and Fairbain, in natural alarm, to see his face hardly over the lines. As he ended he crushed the paper between his fingers, and walked away to the end of the corral. He wanted to be alone, to think, to decide definitely upon what he ought to do. Hawley, according to the schedule just read, must have left Larned alone early the day before; this night he would be camped at the water-hole; with daybreak he expected to resume his lonely journey across the desert to the Salt Fork. For years Keith had lived a primitive life, and in some ways his thought had grown primitive. His code of honor was that of the border, tinged by that of the South before the war. The antagonism existing between him and this gambler was personal, private, deadly—not an affair for any others—outsiders—to meddle with. He could wait here, and permit Hawley to be made captive; could watch him ride unsuspectingly into the power of these armed men, and then turn him over to the law to be dealt with. The very thought nauseated him. That would be a coward's act, leaving a stain never to be eradicated. No, he must meet this as became a man, and now, now before Hope so much as dreamed of his purpose—aye, and before he spoke another word of love to Hope. He wheeled about fully decided on his course, his duty, and met Fairbain face to face.

The Eyes of the Two Met in Defiance.

"Jack," the latter said earnestly, "I read the note over your shoulder, and of course I know what you mean to do. A Southern gentleman could not choose otherwise. But I've come here to beg you to let me have the chance."

"You!" surprised and curious. "What greater claim on that fellow's life have you than I?"

The pudgy hands of the doctor grasped the plainsman's shoulders.

"It's for Christie," he explained brokenly. "She was the one he tried to run away with. You—you know how I feel."

"Sure, I know," shaking the other off, yet not roughly. "But it happened to be Miss Waite he took, and so this is my job, Fairbain. Besides, I've got another score to settle with him."

He wasted little time upon preparations—a few brief words of instruction to Brinton; a request to the doctor not to leave Hope alone; the extracting of a promise from the two "Bar X" men to return to Larned with the prisoners. Then he roped his best horse in the corral, saddled and bridled him, and went into the cabin. She had a light burning, and met him at the door.

"I thought you would never come, but they told me you were astuart."

"Not a scratch, little girl; we have been a lucky bunch. But I have had a great deal to look after. Now I shall be obliged to ride ahead as far as the water-hole, and let you come on with the others a little later, after you get breakfast. You can spare me a few hours, can't you?"

His tone was full of good humor, and his lips smiling, yet somehow she felt her heart sink, an inexplicable fear finding expression in her eyes.

"But—but why do you need to go? Couldn't some of the others?"

"There is a reason which I will explain later," he said, more gravely. "Surely you can trust me, Hope, and feel that I am only doing what it seems absolutely necessary for me to do?" He bent down and kissed her. "It will be only for a few hours, and no cause for worry. Good-bye now, until we meet to-night at the water-hole."

The east was gray with coming daylight as he rode splashing across the stream and up the opposite bank. She watched him, rubbing the blinding mist from her eyes, until horse and man became a mere dark speck, finally fading away completely into the dull plain of the desert.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Duel in the Desert.

Keith rode straight forward into the sandy desolation, spurring his horse into a swift trot. After one glance backward as they clattered up the steep bank, a glance which revealed Hope's slender form in the cabin door, his eyes never turned again that way. He had a man's stern work to do out yonder, and his purpose could not be swerved, his firmness of hand and keenness of eye affected, by any thought of her. His lips compressed, his fingers gripping the rein, he drove all regretful memory from his mind, until every nerve within him throbbed in unison with his present purpose. He was right; he knew he was right. It was not hate, not even revenge, which had set him forth, leaving love behind, but honor—the honor of the South, and of the frontier, of his ancestry and his training—honor that drove him now to meet Hawley face to face, fist to man, to settle the feud between them for all time. And he rode smiling, gladly, as to a tryst, now that he was at last alone, free in the desert.

The hours passed, the sun rising higher in the blazing blue of the sky; the horse, wearied by the constant pull of the sand, had long since slowed down to a walk; the last dim blur of the cottonwoods along the Fork had disappeared; and the rider swayed in the saddle, the dead lifelessness of sky and desert dulling his brain. Yet he had not forgotten his errand—rousing constantly from lethargy to sweep his shaded eyes about the rounded horizon, keenly marking the slightest shadow across the sands, taking advantage of every drift to give him wider viewpoint, rising in his stirrups to scan the leagues of desolation ahead. Twice he drew his revolver from out its sheath, tested it, and slipped in a fresh cartridge, returning the weapon more lightly to its place, the flap of the holster turned back and held open by his leg. The sun beat upon him like a ball of fire, the hot sand flinging the blaze back into his face. He pushed back the upper part of his shirt and drank a swallow of tepid water from a canteen strapped behind the saddle. His eyes ached with the glare, until he saw fantastic red and yellow shapes dancing dizzily before him. The weariness of the long night pressed upon his eye-balls; he felt the strain of the past hours, the lack of food, the need of rest. His head nodded, and he brought himself to life again with a jerk and a muttered word, stirring out into the fiery sunshine the dozen times. Lord, if there was only something moving, something he could concentrate his attention upon, something to rest the straining vision!

But there was nothing, absolutely nothing—just that seemingly endless stretch of sand, circled by the blazing sky, the wind sweeping its surface soundless and hot, as though from the pits of hell; no stir, no motion, no movement of anything animate or inanimate to break the awful monotony. Death! it was death everywhere! his aching eyes rested on nothing but what was typical of death. Even the heat waves seemed fantastic, grotesque, assuming spectral forms.

With every step of advance the brooding silence seemed more profound, more deathlike. He got to marking the sand ridges, the slight variations giving play to the brain. Way off to the left was the mirage of a lake, apparently so real that he had to battle with himself to keep from turning aside. He dropped forward in the saddle, his head hanging low, so blinded by the incessant sun glare he could no longer bear the glitter of that horrible ocean of sand. It was noon now—noon, and he had been riding steadily seven hours. The thought brought his blurred eyes again to the horizon. Where could he be, the man he sought in the heart of this solitude? Surely he should be here by now, if he had left the water-hole at dawn. Could he have gone the longer route, south to the Fork? The possibility of such a thing seared through him like a hot iron, driving the dullness from his brain, the lethargy from his limbs. God! no! Fate could never play such a scurvy trick as that! The man must have been delayed; had failed to leave camp early—somewhere ahead, yonder where the haze marked the union of sand and sky, he was surely coming, riding half dead, and drooping in the saddle.

Again Keith rose in his stirrups, rubbing the mist out of his eyes that he might see clearer, and stared ahead. What was that away out yonder? a shadow? a spot dancing before his tortured vision? or a moving, living something which he actually saw? He could not tell, he could not be sure, yet he straightened up expectantly, shading his eyes, and never losing sight of the object. It moved, grew larger, darker, more real—yet how, it crawled, crawled, crawled toward him. It seemed as if the vague, shapeless thing would never take form, never stand out revealed against the sky so he could determine the truth. He had forgotten all else—the silent desert, the blazing sun, the burning wind—all his soul concentrated on that speck yonder. Suddenly it disappeared—a swale in the sand probably—and, when it rose into view again, he uttered a cry of joy—it was a horse and rider!

Little by little they drew nearer one another, two black specks in that vast ocean of sand, the only moving, living things under the brazen circle of the sky. Keith was ready now, his eyes bright, the cocked revolver gripped hard in his hand. The space between them narrowed, and Hawley saw him, caught a glimpse of the face under the broad hat brim, the burning eyes surveying him. With an oath he stopped his horse, dragging at his gun, surprised, dazed, yet instantly understanding. Keith also halted, and across the intervening desert the eyes of the two men met in grim defiance.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Heavy Luggage.

Every tramp squares and squares with a heavy bag or suit case in your hand—the weight apparently increasing every minute? It's trying, nerve racking and decidedly uncomfortable, isn't it? People who have experienced this will surely call down blessings upon the head of the inventor of rattan or straw bags and suit cases. They have so little weight and the cost is so slight that every girl or man who goes away for short trips where a small case is necessary and where the luggage must be carried by hand should invest in one of these sensible luggage carriers.

Eagle Nest in Western New York.

An eagle's aerie, with five little eaglets, is on the Davis farm in the town of Somerset, Niagara county, on the shores of Lake Ontario.

For many seasons past two American eagles have made their headquarters at the Davis farm, but never until this season did they nest, and so far as known it is the first time that a nest has been built in Niagara county. The eaglets are carefully guarded by the old birds as well as by the members of the Davis family. Hunters are forbidden by law to shoot the birds.—Rochester Post Express.

Painting With a Sponge.

An artist whose work in water color is described in the Studio says that because the sable brushes are too small, she uses for certain sweeping effects of light and shade on the dresses, for example, a sponge. This artist is described as using water colors, not within the narrow limitations usually prescribed, but as an individual means of expression. She sometimes joins three pieces of the water color board together to make the pictures she likes to produce in this medium.

No Time Wasted.

Olaf Larson, working in a millinery warehouse, backed into an elevator shaft and fell down five stories with a load of boxes. Horror-stricken, the other employes hurried down the stairs, only to find him picking himself unharmed out of the rubbish. "Ee do been paid!" he whispered cautiously. "Tal' on Ay had to come down for sells anyway."—Success Magazine.

Shipwreck Defier.

It is getting so that it is safer to be shipwrecked on the ocean than it is to be a passenger in a sinking or stranded.—Syracuse Herald.

NEW LAMPS FOR OLD

WELL KNOWN DISHES SERVED IN NEW WAYS.

Latest Method of "Patting" Oysters Improves Fish and Appearance—Printanier Salad is Dainty and Delicate Dish.

Naturally, it would not do for us all to be cast in the same mold, like tallow candles, for then we should all like the same things and there would be no progressive ideas in the air and no searching for new styles in foods as well as clothing, and no excuse for me to tell you how to cook and serve some well known foods in new ways.

First let me tell you about "patting" oysters as the process of breading them is called. Some oysters may be browned and crisp and more delicate in taste and appearance than we usually see them.

Drain the oysters very well, by placing them in a wire basket and hanging them where their liquor can drip in a receptacle below. Roll cracker crumbs exceedingly fine and season them with salt and pepper and celery salt (this last is excellent for all fish and game). Cover the oysters with this and lay them on a tray in layers and when the first layer is done look them over to see if every part is covered with a thick coating of the cracker dust. This should be done some time before the oysters are to be cooked. Clams smothered in cream are just the thing for supper toward the close of Lent when the appetite for fish is satisfied.

Wash the clams, after draining them and saving the liquor. Chop them in a bowl, for a dozen clams a pint of thin cream thickened with blended flour and butter and nicely seasoned. This is a splended chafing dish mixture; if you do not use a chafer add an egg to the sauce, mix in the clams and bake them until they are a slightly brown over the top. Use shells or individual baking dishes to bake them in.

Printanier is a French word signifying spring-like, and a Printanier salad is the most delicate and dainty of any that can be made.

Tear crisp lettuce leaves in shreds after dripping them in a mixture of oil, vinegar, salt and pepper. Place on the salad plate and lay on chilled, sliced tomatoes, then a few tender spring onions or Bermuda onions sliced, and on the top of all a great spoonful of rich, mild salad dressing. Or use cress and onions and minced celery and rosy spring radishes, dress with French salad dressing made over the recipe I have given so often.—By Henrietta D. Grauel, Domestic Science Lecturer.

Peach Pudding.

This recipe makes a delicious pudding, wholesome for the children and greatly relished by their elders. To one quart can of peaches add four tablespoonfuls of sugar, unless the peaches are already rather sweet. Heat the peaches in their own juice and then drain them, saving the juice, and place, hollow side up, on squares of stale sponge cake in a pudding dish. Now take the juice and mix with it two tablespoonfuls of lemon juice, one egg, very lightly beaten, and one tablespoonful of corn starch moistened with a little cold water. Put this mixture on the stove in a saucepan and let it boil up once or twice and when slightly cooled pour over the peaches. Serve cold. The sirup jellies about the peaches and forms a delicious dessert. This can be eaten without sauce or with cream or milk as one prefers.

With the Cook in the Kitchen.

A delicious way to bake the new halibut just coming in is to cover the fish with milk in the baking pan and baste it with the milk several times during the hour.

If fillets of flounders, commonly known as "sole," are left to lie in salt, parsley, thyme, a sliced onion and lemon juice for half an hour before frying they will take on a flavor much as the French chef gives them. They are best fried in deep fat.

Broiled smelts with maitre d'hotel sauce, seasoned with a little nutmeg as well as the usual lemon juice and parsley are delicious. Prepare the fish as for frying—they should be of good size—dip each into melted butter, then roll in bread and cook over the fire first one side and then the other.

Macaroni Napoli.

Cut four thin slices of bacon into small pieces, fry and strain off the hot fat. Set into a saucepan. Add three-fourth of a can of tomatoes, one sliced onion, one-fourth teaspoonful each of sance and allspice, one-eighth teaspoonful of cayenne and a bit of bay leaf. Bring to the boiling point, simmer one hour and season with salt and pepper. Add cooked macaroni or spaghetti cut into two-inch pieces (of which there should be two cupfuls) and cook until the macaroni is thoroughly heated. Serve very hot.

Silver and Gold Laces.

To clean silver and gold laces or braids when they have become tarnished apply spirits of wine with a soft flannel cloth.

Plain Cake.

One cup sugar, two eggs, nine tablespoons of melted shortening, one cup of milk, 1½ cups flour, two teaspoons baking powder, one teaspoon vanilla.

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