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KEITH OF THE BORDER
A TALE OF THE PLAINS
By RANDALL DARRISH
AUTHOR OF MY LADY OF THE SOUTH,
WHEN WILDERNESS WAS KING ETC.
ILLUSTRATIONS BY LEARDON MELVILL.
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CHAPTER XXI.

"I reckoned I know'd her, and I did."

The marshal turned his eyes toward Hope, and then back upon Scott, evidently slightly interested.

"So? Recognized an old friend, I suppose?"

The slight sneer in "Wild Bill's" soft voice caused Scott to flame up in sudden passion.

"No, I didn't! but I called the turn just the same—she's Christie MacLaire."

The marshal smiled.

"All right, little boy," he said soberly. "Now you trot straight along to bed. Don't let me catch you on the street again to-night, and I'd advise you not to pull another gun—you're too slow on the trigger for this town. Come along, Doctor, and we'll get Miss MacLaire to her hotel."

He shouldered his way through the collected crowd, the other following. Hope endeavored to speak, to explain to Fairbain who she actually was, realising 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 vague 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 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 questioningly on the doctor's face for an instant.

"Well, I happened to be just behind Ned when he went," he said gently, "and 'Red' will be buried on 'Boots 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 me up yet? 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 moral influence might 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 throbbing with life. A narrow bench stood against the wall, with a couple of half-drunken men lounging upon it. The marshal routed them out with a single, expressive gesture.

"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 more directly across to the desk.

"Tommy," he said genially 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. "Hell, Bill, I don't know how I'm



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

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 to-night we let a fellow have it. He's up there now."

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

"Englishman—Walter Spotteswood Montgomery," consulting his book. "Hell of a pompous duck; the boys call him 'Juke 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, "bustle 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.

"Says 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 peevish, sir, an' I reckoned if he was riled up meh more, he might git rambunctious; his language was sure fierce."

"Wild Bill" turned slowly around, still calmly smoking, his eyes exhibiting mild amusement.

"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 smoldering 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 if a lock had given way, then brief scuffling 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 '47.'"

"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."

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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 to 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 rug 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 impostor, 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 quarters 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 came in last night, and I naturally supposed it was you."

Continued on page 7.

McWILLIAMSVILLE.
Harvesting is now on, but it has been very slow work, owing to the extremely wet weather so long prevalent. The grain is about all ripe, but now much cutting has been done.
Miss Lottie Brown, of Toronto, is spending her vacation with her friends here.
Mr. and Mrs. Thos. Glencross, of Traverston, spent Sunday week with Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Moore.
Mrs. Wm. Watson, sr., is still confined to her bed, and not improving much.
Mrs. R. Gregor, and family, of Mt. Forest, spent a week at G. A. Watson's, and are now visiting friends near Dromore.
Mrs. J. Wallace, and son Gordon, of Walkerton, visited their cousins the Watson's, recently.
We extend our sympathy to Mr. Wm. Andrews, who lost his fine new barn by lightning on Saturday last.
Mrs. C. Falconer, and son Kenneth, of Hanover, visited our cot on her way to visit her mother near Dromore, on Friday last.
Messrs. Ralph Harrison and Reuben Wells were among the excursionists to the west. Also Mrs. Dennett.
Mr. and Mrs. Jas. H. McKenzie, of Yeovil, visited with us one day recently.
Mr. James Brown and sons have purchased one hundred and fifty acres from Mr. Dan. McInnis, of Bunnessan, which extends their ranch to three hundred and fifty acres.
Mr. and Mrs. John Moore, of Bethune, Sask., formerly of this place, are now mourning the loss of their bright, smart, little son, John Melvin, who passed peacefully away after a brief illness of four days from brain fever, at the age of one year and fifteen days, death having claimed him on the 13th day of August. We understand it was one of the largest funerals ever seen in that part. The coffin was completely covered with floral tributes from friends and neighbors, which evidenced the high esteem in which the parents and little fellow were held. The services at the house and grave were conducted by their pastor, Rev. Mr. Knott, of the Presbyterian church. We join with the friends who mourn in extending our sympathy.
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