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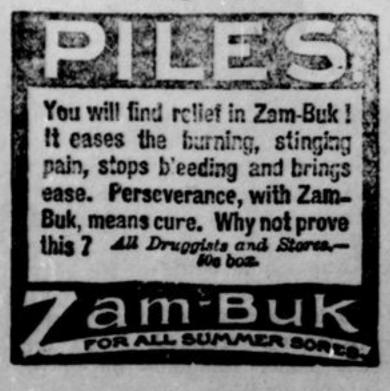
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CHAPTER XXIII.

An Unexpected Meeting.

Keith paused at the landing, look ing 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 hence forth 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 fugipairs, Cement Curbing or tive from justice charged with murder, the temptation to return and fight it out then and there became almost JNO. SCHULTZ or myself at the shop 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. He could merely guess at the truth, unable to produce any proof with which to meet the gambler's certain denial.

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 years older." 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?"

the wall with a gun while I made my

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

dan ?" "Only last night. I had no idea you

were here until Doctor Fairbair 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 pres-

yet not altogether happily. "Let me explain, Captain Keith, for really have not been masquerading. Doctor Fairbain and I arrived upon the same train last evening. He is such a funmy 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 toldand 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 you had been riding an envelope bear-Hickock—and the impudent fellow actually declared he knew me, that I was Christie Maclaire. I tried to explain, but they hurried me through the crowd to the hotel, and I became confused, and forgot. Do you suppose they registered me by that name?"

"Quite likely; at 'cast Fairbain still believes it was the .ristle whom he so milantly escorted last night." "How proviking," 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 it?" yours very closely, but her hair is darker, her eyes have a different expression, and she must be five or six

"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 "Rather; I backed him up against made the mistake in names so laughable. Fairbain gave me your message, but as coming from Christie. 1 "But what brought him there? Are was, of course, greatly surprised, yet responded. The lady very promptly denied having sent for me, but as l 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 within his own. 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, his face toward them.

"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." ter 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 | forth: burning in his eyes. That was the

name of the fellow rooming with Willoughby, the one who seemed to be Hawley's special assistant. Was he here as a spy? His hands clinched on the rail. He was anxious to go down and wring the truth out of him, but instead, he compelled his eyes to her."

smile, turning back to the girl. "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



"Interesting? yes, for I was seeking "Miss Maclaire!" her voice exhibit. after information, and met with some ing startled surprise. "Why-why- success. As to the other question, I oh, I did forget; I never told him dif- am not sure whether I admire the lady ferently. Why, it was most ridicu- or not. She is bright, pretty, and lous." She laughed, white teeth companionable, and in spite of her gleaming between the parted red lips, profession, at heart, I believe, a good woman. But really, Miss Hope, I was too deeply immersed in my purpose to give her personality much consideration. Among other things we spoke of you."

> "I told her something of our adventures together; of how both Hawley and I had been confused. She was anxious to learn who you were, but unfortunately, I have never, even yet, heard your name."

ing that address."

"I remember; it contained the note the man brought to me from Hawley; he had written it that way." She crossed the room, sinking down into a chair facing him. "And you have actually confused me with Christie Maclaire all this while? Have never known who I was?"

my name—I am Hope Waite."

tled by the possibility-"not-not-" "Yes," she burst in, holding out her hands, chapping the locket, "and this was my father's; where did you get

He took the trinket from her, turn ing it over in his fingers. Little by little the threads of mystery were being unraveled, yet, even now, he could not see very far. He looked up from

"Did I not tell you? No; then it was an oversight. This was about the throat of one of the men I buried at Cimmaron Crossing, but-but, Hope, it was not your father."

to his own advantage. Then he saw your picture, and was immediately rely. "Mrs. Murphy found that out; that is why I am here. I heard my minded of the remarkable resem day last week with Mr. and Mrs. blance between you and Christie J. W. Vickers father came to Sheridan, and I wanted Maclaire. Evidently this discovery you to help me find him." He was thinking and did not answer fitted into his plan, and made it pos-

at once, and she went on in some "Do you know anything about him,

Captain Kelth? Where is he? Why is he here? Don't be afraid to tell

hand, retaining the latter, unresisted,

but he was certainly here a few days to property-as he stated to Scottago, for Fairbain met him. They were valued at over a million dollars. That's together in the army. I am going to a stake worth fighting for, and these tell you all I know-it seems to be a two will make a hard combination. tangled web, but the ends must be He's got the apers, or claims to have, somewhere, although, I confess, I am | and they must be the ones stolen from all at sea."

ing forth his earlier suspicion, and history which would make it all how he had stumbled upon facts apparently confirming them. He related her father's robbery, his loss of valuable papers, and the conversation be- hint of any secret has ever reached Keith leaned past her to get a bet | tween Hawley and Scott which led to | me. There are only the four of us. the suspicion that these same pa- Father, Mother, Fred, and I pers had fallen into the hands sure there can be no secret; nothing of the former, and were the which I would not know. Perhaps, it basis of his plot. Hope listened, I could see Miss Maclaire-" breathless with interest, her widely opened eyes filled with wonder. As he concluded speaking she burst

> "He thought he was dealing with Christie Maclaire. He had some reason for getting her away; getting her where he could exercise influence over

Both sat silent, striving to figure brown eyes. out some reasonable explanation.

your father carried?" he asked.

agreements." nected with your family? Did you



"Was Your Call Upoh Miss Maclaire Very Interesting?"

comiortable." She turned toward arm, almost shyly, yet with womanly curiosity which would not be stilled. "Was your call upon Miss Maclaire very interesting? Did you admire her very

Keith's eyes lifted to her face, his ears quick to detect the undertone in her voice.

"Of me? Why?"

"You have not?" "No; I left you at Fort Larned believing you Christie Maclaire supposing it your stage name, of course -and was confirmed in this belief by finding in the holster of the saddle

He shook his head.

"I told you to call me Hope; that is

"Waite!" he leaned forward, star-

the locket into her questioning face.

"I know," her voice choking slight-

He pressed the locket back into her

"I have not seen your father, Hope, the girl that she is the rightful heiress

He told it slowly and simply, bring- might know something in your family

"But I don't understand in the least, Captain Keith. Why did this man Hawley send me to the Salt Fork?" like a mole, for he knows the fraud, and will never come to the surface until everything is in readiness.

"Yes-yes; but who is she?" "That is what makes the matter so hard to unravel. She doesn't even know herself. Hawley is going to take advantage of her ignorance in this respect, and convince her that she is the person he wishes her to represent-but who is the person? If we knew that we might block the

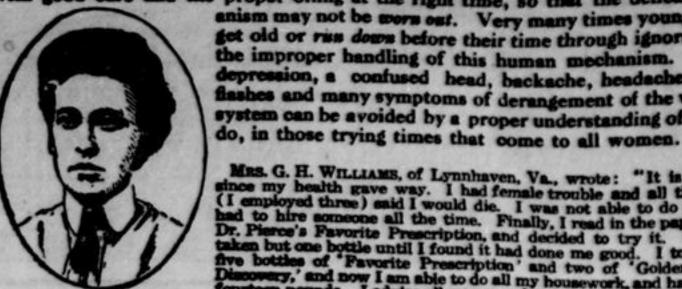
"Do you know of any special papers

"No: none outside his business "Has any one ever disappeared conIOW TO PRESERVE YOUTH AND BEAUTY.

One great secret of youth and beauty for the young woman or the mether to proper understanding of her womanly system and well-being. Every woman, young or old, should knew herself and her physical make up. A good way to arrive at this knowledge is to get a good doctor book, such for instance, as "The People's Common Sense Medical Adviser," by R. V. Pierce, M. D., which can readily be procured by sending thirty-one cents for cloth-bound copy, addressing Dr. Pierce, at Buffalo, N. Y.

The womanly system is a delicate machine which can only be compared to the intricate mechanism of a beautiful watch which will keep in good running order only with good care and the proper oiling at the right time, so that the delicate mechanism

with good care and the proper oiling at the right time, so that the delicate me nism may not be wors out. Very many times young women jet old or run down before their time through ignorance an the improper handling of this human mechanism. Menta depression, a confused head, backache, headache, or hot flashes and many symptoms of derangement of the womanty system can be avoided by a proper understanding of what to



MRS. G. H. WILLIAMS, of Lynnhaven, Va., wrote: "It is six years since my health gave way. I had female trouble and all the doctors (I employed three) said I would die. I was not able to do my work, had to hire someone all the time. Finally, I read in the papers about Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription, and decided to try it. I had not taken but one bottle until I found it had done me good. I took, in all, five bottles of 'Favorite Prescription' and two of 'Golden Medical Discovery,' and now I am able to do all my housework, and have gained fourteen pounds. I advise all women who suffer from female trouble to try your 'Favorite Prescription.' It's the only medicine on earth."

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planation. Your brother must have

told Hawley something—some family

secret-which he felt could be utilized

sible for him to proceed. He has been

trying ever since to get an interview

with the woman, to sound her, and

find out what he can do with her. He

has written letters, sufficiently ex-

your father. I have been trusting you!

must believe me; not so much

whatever it was he told Hawley, and

He picked up his hat from the table,

but she rose to her feet, holding forth

"I cannot thank you enough, Cap-

"You are doing so much, and with no

The long lashes dropped over the

"That I have a personal interest-in

She stood silent, her bosom rising

Continued on page 7.

tain Keith," she exclaimed frankly.

that will give us the clue."

her hands.

you, Hope."

personal interest-"

"Oh, but I have."

"What do you mean?"

and falling to rapid breathing.

have an older sister?"

A. M. HUNT, Secretary

VICKERS.

and sister here.

Mrs. Robinson, of Hampden, vis-"Fred and I were the only children. ited recently in this vicinity. Why should you ask that question?" Miss Martha Torry has returned to Durham after spending a "Because something of that nature would seem to be the only rational excouple of weeks with her brothers

> Mr. Milton Mills, of St. Catharines, spent over the holiday with his uncles, the Hunt brothers. Mr. and Mrs. Herb. Chittick and children, of Lamlash, spent one

Mr. and Mrs. Will Pearson, of Allan Park, spent Sunday before last with relatives in this neighborhood, Mrs. Smith, and daughter, of

Detroit, are visiting for a few weeks with her mother, Mrs. Mc-Culloch, sr. plicit to make it clear his scheme is Mr. and Mrs. John Backus, of

based upon a will drawn, as he claims, Varney, Sundayed with Mr. and by Christie's grandfather. No doubt Mrs. Harry Reay. Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Hunt spent by this time he has fully convinced one evening last week at the of Mr. Wm. Willis, Allan

> Mr. and Mrs. Thos. Turnbull, of Huntsville, are guests in the vicinity. Mrs. McCulloch, sr., has been on the sick list for some time, but we are glad to say she is able to

Mr. George Alexander, we are sorry to say, is under the doctor's care at present. Hope to soon "But I do not," decisively. "You hear of his recovery. Mrs. Taylor, of Burk's Falls, spent a few days of last

be out again.

with the Livingston family, and am other friends. Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Hunt were in Hanover one day last week, and

called on Mr. and Mrs. Pearson. Some time ago, Mr. Ward, who "I am convinced that would be useis organizing a band for the less," he interrupted, rising, and pa- church here, received cing across the floor. "If Hawley has from a wealthy friend in England convinced her of the justice of the in which was enclosed a cheque claim, he will also have pledged her | for \$25, asking that he buy an into secrecy. He is working out of sight strument with this money and present it to some young man in the church to play it for him. We have much pleasure in congratulating Mr. Roy Vickers, who was know a better way; I'll find Fred, and the lucky young man to receive bring him here. He would tell you the instrument,

#### Constipation-

is an enemy within the camp. It will undermine the strongest constitution and ruin the most vigorous health. It leads to indigestion, biliousness, impure blood, bad complexion, sick headaches, and is one of the most frequent causes of appendicitis. To neglect it is slow suicide. Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pills positively cure Constipation. They are entirely vegetable in composition and do not sicken, weaken or gripe. Preserve your health by taking

Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pilla