



MYSTERY OF THE BORDER

A TALE OF THE PLAINS
By RANDALL DADDISH
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WHEN WILDERNESS WAS KING
ILLUSTRATIONS BY DEARBORN PICTORIAL



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SYNOPSIS.

Jack Keith, a Virginian, now a border plainsman, is riding along the Santa Fe trail on the lookout for roaming war parties of savages. He notices a camp fire at a distance and then sees a team attached to a wagon and at full gallop pursued by men on ponies.

CHAPTER II

The Scene of Tragedy.

Whatever might be the nature of the tragedy it would be over with long before this, and those moving black spots away yonder to the west, that he had discerned from the bluff, were undoubtedly the departing raiders. There was nothing left for Keith to do except determine the fate of the unfortunate, and give their bodies decent burial. That any had escaped, or yet lived, was altogether unlikely, unless, perchance, women had been in the party, in which case they would have been borne away prisoners.

Confident that no hostiles would be left behind to observe his movements, Keith pressed steadily forward, leading his horse. He had thus traversed fully half a mile before coming upon any evidence of a fight—here the pursuers had apparently come up with the wagons, and circled out upon either side. From their ponies' tracks there must have been a dozen in the band. Perhaps a hundred yards further along lay two dead ponies. Keith examined them closely—both had been ridden with saddles, the marks of the cinches plainly visible. Evidently one of the wagon mules had also dropped in the traces here, and had been dragged along by his mates. Just beyond came a sudden depression in the prairie down which the wagons had plunged so heavily as to break one of the axles, the wheel lay a few yards away, and, somewhat to the right, there lay the wreck of the wagon itself, two dead mules still in the traces, the vehicle stripped of contents and charred by fire. A hundred feet further along was the other wagon, its tongue broken, the canvas top ripped open, while between the two were scattered odds and ends of wearing apparel and provisions, with a pile of boxes smoking grimly. The remaining mules were gone, and no semblance of life remained anywhere. Keith dropped his reins over his horse's head, and, with Winchester cocked and ready, advanced cautiously.

Death from violence had long since become almost a commonplace occurrence to Keith, yet now he shrank for an instant as his eyes perceived the figure of a man lying motionless across the broken wagon tongue. The grizzled hair and beard were streaked with blood, the face almost unrecognizable, while the hands yet grasped a bent and shattered rifle. Evidently the man had died fighting, beaten down by overwhelming numbers after expending his last shot. Then those hands had scalped and left him where he fell. Fifty feet beyond, shot in the back, lay a younger man, doubled up in a heap, also scalped and dead. That was all; Keith scouted over a wide circle, even scanning the stretch of gravel under the river bank, before he could fully satisfy himself there were no others in the party. It seemed impossible that these two traveling alone would have ventured upon such a trip in the face of known Indian hostility. Yet they must have done so, and once again his lips muttered: "Of all the blame fools!"

Suddenly he halted, staring about over the prairie, obsessed by a new thought, an aroused suspicion. There had appeared merely the hoofprints of the one horse alongside of the fleeing wagons when they first turned out from the trail, and that horse had been newly shod. But there were two dead ponies lying back yonder; neither shod, yet both had borne saddles. More than this, they had been spurred, the blood marks still plainly visible, and one of them was branded; he remembered it now, a star and arrow. What could all this portend? Was it possible this attack was no Indian affair after all? Was the disfiguring of bodies, the scalping, merely done to make it appear the act of savages? Driven to investigation by this suspicion, he passed again over the trampled ground, marking this time every separate indentation, every faintest imprint of hoof or foot. There was no impression of a moccasin anywhere, every mark remaining was of booted feet. The inference was sufficiently plain—this had been the deed of white men, not of red; foul murder, and not savage war.

The knowledge seemed to sear Keith's brain with fire, and he sprang to his feet, hands clinched and eyes blazing. He could have believed this of Indians, it was according to their nature, their method of warfare; but the cowardliness of it, the atrocity of the act, as perpetrated by men of his own race, instantly aroused within him a desire for vengeance. He wanted to run the fellows down, to discover their identity. Without thinking of personal danger he ran forward on their trail, which led directly westward, along the line of cottonwoods. These served to conceal his own movements, yet for the moment, burning with passion, he was utterly without caution, without slightest sense of peril. He must know who was guilty of such a crime; he felt capable of killing them even as he would poisonous snakes. It was a perfectly plain trail to follow, for the fugitives, apparently convinced of safety, and confident their cowardly deed would be charged to Indian raiding, had made no particular effort at concealment, but had ridden away at a gallop, their horses' hoofs digging deeply into the soft turf. So this retreat they had followed closely along

the river bank, aiming for the ford, and almost before he realized it Keith was himself at the water's edge where the trail abruptly ended, staring vaguely across toward the opposite shore. Even as he stood there, realizing the futility of further pursuit amid the maze of sand dunes opposite, the sharp reports of two rifles reached him, spurts of smoke rose from the farther bank, and a bullet chugged into the ground at his feet, while another sang shrilly overhead.

These shots, although neither came sufficiently near to be alarming, served to send Keith to cover. Cool-headed and alert now, his first mad rage dissipated, he scanned the opposite bank cautiously, but could nowhere discover any evidence of life. Little by little he comprehended the situation, and decided upon his own action. The fugitives were aware of his presence, and would prevent his crossing the stream, yet they were not at all liable to return to this side and thus reveal their identity. To attempt any further advance would be madness, but he felt perfectly secure from molestation so long as he remained quietly on the north shore. Those shots were merely a warning to keep back; the very fact that the men firing kept concealed was proof positive that they simply wished to be left alone. They were not afraid of what he knew now, only desirous of



A Bullet Chugged Into the Ground at His Feet.

not being seen. Confident as to this, he retreated openly, without making the slightest effort to conceal his movements, until he had regained the scene of murder. In evidence of the truth of his theory no further shots were fired, and although he watched that opposite bank carefully, not the slightest movement revealed the presence of others. That every motion he made was being observed by keen eyes he had no doubt, but this knowledge did not disconcert him, now that he felt convinced fear of re-venge would keep his watchers at a safe distance. Whoever they might be they were evidently more anxious to escape discovery than he was fearful of attack, and possessed no desire to take his life, unless it became necessary to prevent recognition. They still had every reason to believe their attack on the wagons would be credited to hostile Indians, and would consider it far safer to remain concealed, and thus harbor this supposition. They could not suspect that Keith had already stumbled upon the truth, and was determined to verify it.

Secure in this conception of the situation, yet still keeping a wary eye about to guard against any treachery, the plainsman, discovering a spade in the nearest wagon, hastily dug a hole in the sand, wrapped the dead bodies in blankets, and deposited them there, filling above the mound the charred remains of horses as some slight protection against prying wolves. He searched the clothing of the men, but found little to reward the effort, a few letters which were slipped into his pockets to be read later, some ordinary trinkets hardly worth preserving except that they might assist in identifying the victims, and about the neck of the elder man, a rather peculiar locket, containing a portrait painted on ivory. Keith was a long time opening this, the spring being very ingeniously concealed, but upon finally succeeding, he looked upon the features of a woman of middle age, a strong mature face of marked refinement, exceedingly attractive still, with smiling dark eyes, and a perfect wealth of reddish brown hair. He held the locket open in his hand for several minutes, wondering who she could be, and what possible connec-

tion she could have held with the dead. Something about that face smiling up into his own held peculiar fascination for him, gripping him with a strange feeling of familiarity, touching some dim memory which failed to respond. Surely he had never seen the original, for she was not one to be easily forgotten, and yet eyes, hair, expression, combined to remind him of some one whom he had seen but could not bring definitely to mind. There were no names on the locket, no marks of identification of any kind, yet realizing the sacredness of it, Keith slipped the fragile gold chain about his neck, and securely hid the trinket beneath his shirt.

It was noon by this time, the sun high overhead, and his horse, with a dangling rein, still nibbling daintily at the short grass. There was no reason for his lingering longer. He swept his gaze the length and breadth of the desolate valley, and across the river over the sand hills. All alike appeared deserted, not a moving thing being visible between the bluffs and the stream. Still he had the unpleasant feeling of being watched, and it made him restless and eager to be away. The earlier gust of anger, the spirit of revenge, had left him, but it had merely changed into a dogged resolution to discover the perpetrators of this outrage and bring them to justice for the crime. The face in the locket

attack, but kept guard against treachery. As he rode, his eyes never left those far-away sand dunes, although his perceived no movement, no black dot even which he could conceive to be a possible enemy. Now that he possessed ample time for thought, the situation became more puzzling. This stumbled upon must have had a cause other than blind chance. It was the culmination of a plot, with some reason behind more important than ordinary robbery. Apparently the wagons contained nothing of value, merely the clothing, provisions, and ordinary utensils of an emigrant party. Nor had the victims' pockets been carefully searched. Only the mules' had been taken by the raiders, and they would be small booty for such a crime.

LIVE IN COMPLETE ISOLATION

Outside World Practically Unknown to the Dwellers in the Land of Moab.

Most travelers who visit the Holy Land content themselves with a visit to that restricted part west of Jordan. The mountainous regions of Moab, as seen by them from Jerusalem, are lost in the purple haze that constantly hangs over them, and the great stretches beyond are covered in mystery. This is true partly because of the fewer historical incidents connected with the eastern regions, but mainly on account of the great abyss of the Jordan valley that has always acted as a barrier. Few who descend into the valley, 1,300 feet below sea level, undertake to climb the hills beyond, which rise to a height of 3,000 feet. The most striking thing about Moab has always been its isolation. However much connected by race and vicinity with their western kinsmen, the dwellers in Eastern Palestine have always been distinct and their lands have never been occupied by the nations on the west except through acts of aggression and conquest. Even today this isolation is still felt. In giving an idea of their knowledge of present day geography, one of them remarked: "There are only four seas in the world, two of which are the Dead sea and the Sea of Galilee." Both of these are in sight of their own hills.—Christian Herald.

Aeroplane is Simple.

The working parts of the modern flying machine are infinitely fewer in number than those of the automobile, the motor boat, the railroad locomotive or the steamship. Far more complex is the operation of a high-powered motor car than that of a high-powered aeroplane. Far more delicately adjusted are the thousands of parts of the steam or electric locomotive than the mechanism of the flying machine. It is this very simplicity of construction and operation that has enabled the aeroplane to outdo in continuous motion every other known form of conveyance, except steamers, motor boats and sailing ships, and these last named are able to maintain their motion only because of their huge driving mechanism, out of all proportion to the bulk that it propelled.

Forgotten Foods.

It is well to remember that many plants which once were used as vegetables have been allowed to drop out of our bills of fare. Our forefathers, for instance, sometimes dined off elder top and burdock root, and the early shoots of the hop were considered a great delicacy and were cooked and eaten as asparagus. Walter Jerrold in his "Highways and Byways in Kent," recalls a time when Kentish children could "tell of many pleasant hours spent among the hedges in search of the wild hop top and of the wholesome suppers made upon the well earned treasure ere they learned to think their food the better for being rare and costly.

A Narrow Escape.

"I was once urging a bachelor," says George Ade, "to remain at the club for a game of cards; but he insisted that he must call upon a lady friend. I finally said: 'Don't you know it is dangerous for a man to call upon a lady after he has been drinking?' 'That's so,' said my bachelor friend as he took off his hat and topped. 'Many a man has become engaged to be married in such circumstances.'—The Sunday Magazine.

Love's young dream.

"Love's young dream," said Mr. Medderrass to the young people, "is called, facetiously, or sarcastically, so to speak, which ever way you look at it, because, when the fellow who's doing the dreaming wakes up, he often gets mad because it wasn't no dream after all!"

Expert Opinion.

There once was a Jersey muskrat, which lay on Miss Lizzie McSweet, and said: "It is true, what they all say of you—That your good enough for one to eat."

As to Costumes.

"Why do they call this a burlesque?" asked Mr. Medderrass of his city cousin, who had taken him to the theater. "Oh, because it is simply a take-off, I guess the city cousin said. 'Well, I guess it is,' said Mr. Medderrass, 'at the amateur march nights.'"

Onlooker

WEEKLY NEWSBIT

After Awhile



All dem roses gwine ter fade—
Honey, don't yo' sigh;
Gwine ter be mo' roses made
Fo' yo', by an bye;
Gwine ter be mo' roses grow—
Don't yo' worry chile,
'Bout dem thins dat huz't yo' so
Rose—ateh while.

We des bleeged ter hab some night,
Sho' es yo' is bo'n.
Ateh while dey gwine be light—
Fines kin' of mo'n.
Dahkes clouds dat eveh was,
Hangin' round dis chile.
Don't yo' worry none, becuz—
Sunshine—ateh while.

All dem teahs dat come terday
Has dey purpose too.
Ateh while dey gwine erway—
Hits de way dey do.
Teahs—dey wash erway yo' woe—
Don't yo' worry chile—
Soon dey sunshine on de snow—
Ateh while a smile.

Another Opportunity.
A Certain Man, having read somewhere that Opportunity knocks only once at each one's Door, concluded to Sit up all Night for fear he would Miss the call. So, while he was Sitting near his Door there came a heavy Knock thereon.

When he opened the Door a Stranger seized him and Beat him all up and Took his Money and Garments and Chided him for being so Easy.
"But," said the Man, thinking to excuse himself, "I thought it was Opportunity who knocked."
"So it was," responded the Other, "but it was my Opportunity."
Moral: It is Better to Carry your Opportunity with you.

Not the Real Thing.

"No," said Mr. Medderrass, "the Consolidated, Combined, Colossal Megatherium and Mastodontic Monarchs of the Minstrel World didn't do well in our town. They didn't tell a single joke that any of us could remember, and we didn't get the funny points figured out until two weeks after they had left town, which was, of course, and consequently, too late for applause. Give us a joke we recognize as such from old acquaintance, and we'll do our parts as an audience; so to speak, is first before indulging in the proper amount of laughter."

Fatally Natural.

"You call yourself a German dialect comedian?"
The manager of the comic opera company sneered so forcibly that the wings shook.
"Call yourself a German dialect comedian?" he repeated. "Why, I can understand every word you say during your turn."
Realizing at last that his education had been a curse to him, the miserable aspirant for dramatic honors slunk out of the theater.

Vain Person.

"We had a big argument at our literary club this afternoon," said Mrs. Tigg.
"That so?" asked Mr. Tigg. "Somebody have a new hat?"
"No, indeed. It was that proud Mrs. Readem. She claimed that she could understand Henry James. Said she had found the key to his stories, and that it was to read them back wards."

What She Would Have.

"For instance, Johnnie," said the teacher to the bright boy of the arithmetic class, "suppose your father had a hundred dollars and gave you twenty or fifty, and then borrowed ten from her, what would she have?"
"She'd have a sore hand."
"What do you mean?"
"He'd have to cut the money loose from her fingers."

Says Mr. Medderrass.

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OTHER PART ALL RIGHT.



He—When we are married we will live on bread and kisses, won't we, darling?
She—Oh! I don't like bread.

Came Easy.

Representative James T. Lloyd of Missouri was discussing the president's belief that the extra session of congress would not try to revise the whole tariff law.
"He had about 'a push to go on,'" said Lloyd, "as the man who approached a banker with a request to lend him money on a note. He wanted five hundred dollars."
"Can you get an indorser?" asked the banker.
"Sure," replied the prospective borrower, mentioning the indorser's name.
"But has he got any money?"
"Lots of it," answered the other.
"He wins it at poker."—The Sunday Magazine.

Apicultural.

Mother—Yes, Johnny, the queen bee is boss.
Johnny—How about the presidential bee?

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