

THE KEEN-EDGED KNIFE

By ROSE HENDERSON

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BELOW were the gray depths that lay slumbering and mysterious beyond the cliff's ragged edge. Above was the clear, calm, in-terminable blue. Cuma Ventura crouched in the warm sand, leaning her head against the rough rock at her side. Behind her were thick short cactus bushes growing in scattered clumps and back of these the sides of the mountain rose, steep, jagged and barren. The rock was warm against her cheek though the sun was an hour below the Gaudaloupe peaks and the cactus shadows were growing darker on the long slopes. The air seemed a heavy with silence. No bird sang. A vinegerone slipped under a stone at the edge of the cliff.

The girl sat quietly, her head bowed. The heavy, dark braids were bound with bands of glittering beads. Away in the distance sounded the faint tinkle of sheep-bells and the dull barking of a dog. At these sounds the girl raised her head. She snatched from her neck a small round locket, stared at the trinket a moment as it lay in her hand, and then flung it over the cliff into the chasm below. Her slim brown face was flushed; her eyes were large with pain but there were no tears in them.

"So it meant not anything to him—not anything," she muttered. The truth was slowly becoming real to her and it came with the weight of death itself. It was hard to believe after the beautiful dreams, so hard. There would be nothing more to be happy about. She would have to marry Petro as her father wished. Duro, her pony, and the new saddle would be his. He would beat the little Duro and her, too, he would beat her of course when he was jealous and angry.

At the thought of the ugly Mexican suitor her face broke into quick angry frowns. She pulled her long braids over her shoulders. Pierre had patted them once as she rode beside him and she had blushed foolishly. She hated herself for those blushes. And when his hand had chanced to touch hers on the saddle-horn, or when he had leaned over her, helping her to read the English books, she had trembled with a new and delicious joy.

She had taught "in to know the desert and the mountains. He was often reckless in his ignorance. Once with her lips she had drawn the blood from a rattlesnake bite on his arm and Pierre had called her a brave little nurse. They had ridden for hours, for days together under the open sky. Often they had sat here among the rocks before the cliff. He had called it "the edge of the world." Once when she stood very near the perilous brink, he had caught her back suddenly, tenderly, and her head had rested for a moment on his shoulder. Together they had felt the twilight come. She had listened to his talk of his own people, of the cold winters, the snow, the sleighing, and the strange noisy cities. She had listened with her heart beating fast, her eyes upon his face and her ears filled with the music of his voice. They had seen the stars come into the deep dark sky and had watched the blue and purple shadows that cling along the "edge of the world" after sunset. Once a mountain lion had crept upon them and Pierre had shot the creature with her gun. He was careless about weapons himself, and often went unarmed even after nightfall.

Then he had gone away. His letter came explaining his hasty leaving. He would come back soon. How she wept over the letter and the desolate loneliness that came with his absence. But he would come back, and she waited. She had borne her father's scolding and Petro's hateful presence, and she had been happy through it all. Now the thought of her happiness was more bitter than the memory of her misery. He had come back and it meant nothing to him. He had played with her and then cast her aside, as she would gather a yellow poppy in the mountains and throw it away, thirsty and helpless, on the hot sand. The girl's breast heaved, her eyes glowed, little points of light scintillating in their still depths. She knitted her low dark brows and pulled the small silver-handled knife from her belt.

"He shall not go back," she said softly. Her fingers stole along the sharp blade, testing its keen edge, and her lips parted in a cunning smile. It was the kind of smile that often flashed across old Diego's heavy lips. Cuma had hated her father for that smile. Once he had stabbed a half-breed cow-puncher because the man refused to trade ponies with him, and Cuma watched the wretch reel from his saddle, cursing. She had forgotten the ugly horror of it now and remembered only the quick, soft thrust of the knife.

"He shall not go," she repeated. She sprang to her feet with a swift, easy grace. She was strong and supple and closely knit. Her slender, rounded figure was as full of life as an antelope's. It was this abounding vigor that had attracted the man she had grown to love. It had held him in spite of the difference in their breeding. Sometimes its grip was stronger than the call of generations of civilization and environment. She

was so simply and so wholly a woman. And her mind was ready, eager to follow his. Sometimes he had wondered if she might not learn his way of life, but that was only when he had grown delirious with the sense of her. When he weighed the matter in soberer moments he knew that this was impossible, that it would mean his coming to her level in the end.

Upon his return to the plains he had steeled his heart against her and she had felt the change in her first keen look. The desert wildness had not robbed her of the subtle intuitions of her sex. He did not see the fires of her hate. She hid them under the heavy-lashed eyelids, and she stifled the hot pain in her breast. But the fires of her hate were burning and the pain in her breast was not dead. Twilight was creeping up the long valley and the girl's figure was blurred against the dull background.

"He shall not go," she said again and gazed over the edge of the cliff where the tiny gold locket had gone.

Then suddenly she stood erect listening. There was the quick, soft step of padded feet among the cactus bushes, a rustle, and a low growl that sent a chill through the girl's warm veins. She sprang to her feet, lithe, quick-eyed and alert. There was no mistaking the sound. It was a panther. She felt in anticipation the sudden crushing of mouth and claws upon her, and every muscle was nerve for resistance. But the beast seemed to be parrying an assault, and she peered into the cactus jungle at her back. Through the branches of a dwarf saguara she caught sight of a long, tense body crouched close above the ground. She watched it stealthily out of the tail of her eye. It was creeping forward with a sneaking, cat-like movement, but it was not coming directly toward her. The girl's head turned, following the animal's advance, but her body was still like the stiff, motionless cactus beside her. Her fingers tightened their grip on the knife and the breath came noiselessly through her parted lips. In a flash her mind took in every detail of the situation, the yawning chasm a few feet in front of her, the ragged mountain at her back, and the crouching beast advancing stealthily over the sand. All the fierceness and cunning of the desert-born animal was reflected in the tense suppleness of her pose. Only one thing puzzled her, and that was the direction of the panther's advance. She was losing the yellow form in the deeper bushes at her back. Suddenly there was a scuffling and snapping in the shadows, a man's low curse and the ripping of the panther's claws against coarse clothing. In a moment two bodies rolled struggling on the ground beside the girl. She saw the man's arms tense and knotted against the beast's shaggy breast. She saw his brown hair.

"Pierre, Pierre," she cried, breathlessly. He, too, had been lingering at the old trysting place.

The claws were buried in the man's shoulders, the grinning mouth was reaching for his throat, but the brown arms with their rigid muscles held the creature back. The man's strength was being tested to the uttermost. His body swayed above the brute's. His hands clutched the straining neck. They came nearer, almost against the girl's feet. She saw the man's arms bloody with cuts and scratches, his face white, his teeth set; she could hear his hoarse breathing. As they turned toward her she plunged the knife into the panther's taft, yellow throat.

The angered beast whirled about suddenly, dropped the man's shoulders and sprang upon his new enemy. The girl crumpled under his weight, the knife fell, her hands clutched blindly at the open jaws. The man jumped to his feet. The panther leaped forward against the girl's body and the two, struggling together, lurched over the cliff's edge and disappeared. The man flung himself on the ground and calling wildly, leaned far over the inscrutable depths.

But the girl did not answer. Her last glimpse of the world was a confused blur, the jagged cliff's edge and the sky's dull crimson whirling madly, and then the blue and purple depths rushing upward as her feet left the earth. And on the sand at the rock's edge the silver-handled knife lay dusty and blood-stained.

Homing Pigeons Not Guided by Instinct

It is popularly believed that a homing pigeon is able to find its way home from any distance merely by exercising this mysterious something called instinct. Nothing could be farther from the truth. A young pigeon might love his home better than his life, but he could no more find his way back to his loft from a distance of 300 miles, if before being taken to that point he had not learned some intervening landmarks, than could an aviator, without perfect mechanical instruments and maps, find his way from New York to San Francisco.

Homing pigeons return to their lofts, says Jack O'Donnell, in the Saturday Evening Post, primarily because their loft represents love, food, warmth, kindness and comfort. It's home and they are homing pigeons.

Mr. O'Donnell cites instances to prove that it is memory and knowledge of the country, rather than instinct, that takes the birds back to their homes.

Keep Silence

Jud Tunkins says everybody ought to think before he speaks, and in many cases keep right on thinkin'.

DAIRY FARM STOCK

FACTS ABOUT COSTS OF PRODUCING MILK

That feed farms more than 50 per cent of the total cost of milk production, and that farms where cows are kept for a city milk-production service have much higher costs, are two of the items found in a recent two-year survey taken on 20 farms in Walworth county. This was done by men employed by the experiment station, says a writer in the Wisconsin Farmer.

In 1923 the average cost of producing 100 pounds of milk was \$1.96 and the cost of producing a pound of butterfat was 56 cents. The average price received that year by these producers was \$2.39 per 100 pounds of milk and 68 cents per pound of butterfat, showing 23 cents margin on milk and 12 cents margin on fat over costs.

In 1924 the average cost of producing milk was \$2.25, and each pound of butterfat cost 62 cents to produce, while the dairymen received \$2.33 per 100 pounds of milk and 65 cents for a pound of butterfat. This cut their margins to six cents and three cents.

Good home-grown crops of grain and forages help a great deal to lower the expenses in the feed bill, and wise buying of the necessary additional feed items helps to reduce the cost some more. Labor amounted to about 25 per cent of the costs, and it was reckoned at only 26 cents an hour. Milk hauling and pasture costs amounted to about 6 per cent of all costs.

Men conducting milk routes found it cost \$3.42 for each 100 pounds of milk, but the return was proportionate to costs in most cases. The cost of cow keeping was \$224 a head with one farm where milk was taken to a city route. The average cost of keeping a cow on all the farms was \$142 a year.

Cows averaging less than 250 pounds fat formed herds which were losers in this intensive dairy region. Those making 220 to 250 pounds and over were on the profit side for their owners.

Balanced Ration Quite Necessary in Dairying

Dairy cattle, in particular, but all animals in general, require plenty of good feed. Unless this is provided, attention to other matters will be of no avail. Time spent in a study of the animals will teach the owner how to make up a balanced ration and enable him to feed animals more intelligently. Successful dairymen have found that it pays to remove waste from mangers. They keep all feed boxes clean and sweet by prompt removal of waste and by occasional washing with a liquid disinfectant prepared and applied in strict accordance with directions printed on the package.

Nature has generously furnished us with one of the best means of controlling diseases, in the form of sunlight. Nearly all disease-producing germs are quickly killed by rays of the sun. So all barns should be built with plenty of windows to admit an abundance of sunshine.

Clean bedding helps in keeping animals healthy and comfortable. Animals plastered with manure and filth show poor care. A dirty coat of hair provides a favorable breeding place for microbes and animal parasites, while, well-bedded, clean animals thrive much better.

Calving Cow Should Be Given Close Attention

The cow, due to calve, should be confined nights in a clean, warm shed or box stall. During the day it is best for the cow to run with the herd. Normal conditions should be maintained as far as possible, but the safety of the calf and the health of the cow must be insured.

Just prior to calving the cow should be receiving only light laxative feeds such as bran, oats, and oil meal. Alfalfa hay is always good. If wheat pasture is accessible, the kind of the grain is not so important as the amount fed. Grain should be reduced by one-half a few days before calving.

Dairy Hints

Cattle have the sharpest sight, horses next, dogs the poorest.

A well-ventilated and light barn is essential. Remove all litter twice a day.

A too generous feeding of the calf for the first few days may result in scours.

It is a waste of time to try to feed a calf from a bucket until he is good and hungry.

Vaccination for pink eye will aid in checking the trouble from sweeping through the herd.

The nervous temperament of the milch cow is much more highly developed than that of any other farm animal.

Kaffir put in the shock to be fed a fodder should not be fed until it is fairly well cured, since green fodder has a tendency to cause bloating or indigestion.

SHEEP KILL WEEDS AND MAKE PROFIT

Sheep are first-class weed killers. They eat over eighty known species of weeds, and although not as good brush eaters as goats, can clean up light brush land in a very few years. Sheep can use profitably a lot of waste feed around the farm. They pick over stubble fields, make good use of beet tops and are often used to keep down grass and weeds on irrigation ditches and around fences or in orchards. Lambs make an ideal source of meat supply for summer use for people who live some distance from market and do not have a supply of fresh meat. Families that could not well dispose of even a small carcass of veal in warm weather can easily dispose of a small lamb carcass. There is nothing more palatable than the meat from a young lamb or yearling that has been properly killed and dressed and then well cooked.

Of great economic importance is the fact that wool is one agricultural product of which we do not produce enough for our own use. America uses annually about 500,000,000 pounds of wool, of which 320,000,000 pounds are imported. Since tariff laws were made to encourage home industry, wool receives the benefit of a protective tariff and is one of the few agricultural products selling for better prices in 1924 than in 1913, estimated in terms of goods that it will buy.

Consequently it affords an opportunity for the farmer to put some of his land and labor into a well-protected industry, rather than into the growing of products, the prices of which are low because they are governed by cheap European labor. It is hardly necessary to re-emphasize the need of live stock on the farm to use up unsalable products and restore fertility to the soil. The sheep has been said to possess "a golden hoof," because of its ability to clean up waste land and restore fertility to worn-out soil. There is a great deal of unused land on farms in Colorado that could be put to profitable use raising sheep.—Charles I. Bray, Colorado Agricultural College in Bulletin 304, "Sheep Production in Colorado."

Alfalfa Gaining Favor

Among Horse Breeders

Many farmers have looked with suspicion on alfalfa hay as a feed for horses. "This, however, is no longer true," says H. R. Cox, agronomy specialist at the New Jersey State College of Agriculture, "for actual trials have convinced most farmers that alfalfa is safe and good when certain precautions are taken."

Farmers early found horses to be so fond of alfalfa that if the manger is kept full the animals are very apt to eat too much. Accordingly their first precaution was to feed alfalfa in moderate amounts, not more than a pound to a hundred of live weight. Excellent results are now secured by making alfalfa furnish about half of the roughage, the rest being furnished by timothy hay, corn stover, or even straw. This generally does away with the danger from overeating alfalfa.

A second precaution now taken by farmers is not to feed dusty or moldy hay to horses, since they are more susceptible than cattle to ailments caused by spoiled hay, which sometimes produces heaves and other troubles. Because alfalfa is apt to have a little more dust or mold in it than grass hay, special care is taken in harvesting and storing it.

A large crop of alfalfa was produced on many farms in New Jersey this year and, though primarily for cattle feed, it will form a substantial part of the horse ration on these farms.

Pigs at Weaning Time Should Be Given Grain

Pigs at weaning time should be getting all the grain they will eat. The ration should include tankage or skim milk. With a good pasture to run on the pigs should be coming right along and getting a good start for market weight. Pigs that are doing well should make a pound a day gain in weight.

Self-feeders are a convenient means for feeding corn and tankage, and the use of self-feeders results in as good and often better gains than the hand-feeding method. Look the self-feeders over before you need to start using them to be sure they are in good working order. A self-feeder should keep the feed dry, insure that feed is before the pigs at all times, and prevent waste by leakage or too free running of feed.

Crowd the Fall Pigs

Fall pigs will make as satisfactory growth and development as spring pigs if farrowed early, started right and fed a properly balanced ration. They should be farrowed in worm-free quarters and have access to pasture as late as possible in the winter. They should be vaccinated at eight weeks old, and weaned when ten weeks old. They should be crowded as rapidly as possible from the time they begin to eat. After weaning they should have one-third pound of tankage daily.

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Courtesy Title.

"Reverend" was generally used throughout England in the Fifteenth century as a title of respect. A young man would address his senior or superior as "Reverend Sir." The habit was continued in respect to the clergy and by the Seventeenth century it was generally used as a title. It was established by custom, not authority, and belongs to no special denomination.

Bible Never Wears Out.

The Bible, however, never wears out; it never loses its appeal; it claims a wider audience with every century; the plain man who knows life at first hand often understands it better than the philosopher; and all of us get more vital help from it than from all the philosophers we ever read.—Harry Emerson Fosdick.

Many Kinds of Oak.

The sign by which all oaks may be recognized is the acorn. All acorn-bearing trees were given a name long years ago by the Britons, and in our modern language this name is oak. As time went on and settlement of the world was extended many kinds of oaks were found, and there are now known no less than 300.

Pat Reply.

In a Wexford church, the minister announced his, text "Paul we know and Apollos we know, but who are these?" Just then the verger was showing two strangers into a pew, so in an audible whisper he said: "Two commercial travelers from White's hotel, your reverence."—Western Christian Advocate.

Wonder of Nature.

A feather, one of the world's most perfect structures, has been growing perfect for possibly a million years, says Capper's Weekly. A single pinion from an eagle's wing has nearly a million different parts. The whole wing is a sail that strikes the wind firmly yet elastically, not letting the air through the web, and yet not being broken. It enormously increases the bird's power of rowing in the air, and yet how little it adds to weight.

Recompense.

Ad in London Times—"Two thousand golf balls for sale. Advertiser lives on the boundary of a golf club and would sell these sliced balls as the only way of recompensing himself for broken windows and rained flower beds."—Boston Transcript.

Classics.

One of the movie advertisements speaks of a "laugh classic," naturally suggesting the weep classic, the thrill classic and the custard-pie classic.

The Master.

"We are not going out this evening," said the husband very emphatically, and sitting action to the word they went out for the evening.

Her Cognitive Ear.

From a story—"And on and on she chatted, while I tried to listen politely with one ear and think about my own dinner with the other."

Relative Sorrows.

The sorrow of yesterday is as nothing; that of today is bearable; but that of tomorrow is gigantic, because indistinct.—Euripides.

Minority Has It.

If the majority really rules, the locomotives would have to stop at the crossings for the flivvers.—Arkansas Gazette.

Summer Hard on Paint.

Careful government experiments have determined that exterior paint wears most rapidly in summer.

Leap-Frog Shoes.

Shoes with springs on the bottoms have been invented for children who want "leap-frog" with a thrill.

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Children and Coconuts.

In Rarotonga, the most populous of the Cook islands in the Pacific ocean, law compels the head of each family to plant and cultivate a coconut tree for each year of a child's age until it is old enough to plant trees for itself.

Precious Stones in China.

Among the richer people in China, who do not place reliance on native banks, the most convenient manner of keeping their wealth is to invest it in precious stones for the adornment of the ladies of their families. The habit is not, however, without drawback and dangers, for armed robbers regard "great families" as lawful prey, and riches kept in this shape provide bandits with a never failing source of supplies.

Be Sure of Land Title.

Never buy a piece of land unless you get an abstract of title or a title insurance policy. A Torrenized title is one of the safest.

Affliction's Lead.

Affliction teaches a wicked man to pray; prosperity never.—Ben Johnson.



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