

# A TENDERFOOT'S WOOING

CLIVE PHILLIPPS WOLLEY  
(AUTHOR OF "GOLD, GOLD IN CARIBOO," ETC.)

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### CHAPTER VI (Con.)

The voice of her own world was calling to her, and of course she would go back to it, and he could not blame her; but how he hated the other fellow.

"Thank you, Mr. Anstruther," said Mrs. Rolt, at last, as he paused for a moment. "You have been to use what David was to Saul, I think. But we must not make you do all the work. Won't you give us one song, Jim? Sing 'Somebody's a-callin'." Mr. Anstruther has carried us all off to England, I think, and I want somebody to call me home again."

Her hand was lying on the little Japanese table by the side of her chair, and in the twilight the Boss's great fist closed over it.

He appreciated his mate's loyalty to himself, and his chosen profession. Before the advent of Mr. Anstruther, Jim had whiled away many a long evening for the ranch folk with his mellow baritone, untrained it is true, but full and sweet as a thrush's voice, so that he could hardly refuse Mrs. Rolt's request.

"The herds are gathered in from plain and hill. Who's that a-callin'?" The boys are sleeping and the ranch is still. Who's that a-callin' so sweet?"

He sang, and the old days came back to him. In spite of herself Kitty's face softened, and beneath her closed lids she saw pictures in which the stranger had no part.

"Yes, that is pretty," said Anstruther critically, when the song had come to a close, "especially the part about one, isn't it? But the rest of it is a bit weak, isn't it? It seems to me that fellows don't think the words matter nowadays."

"Especially in your favorite comic operas. There is not much poetry about the 'Colonel on his little tin gee-gee,' or your 'Singularly deep young man,' is there?" asked Mrs. Rolt.

"I did not think that people went to the comic operas for poetry?" "Those seem to be about the only things they do go to."

"Perhaps, and yet you know we have some songs in the Old Country which hardly need the music to make them beautiful."

"Old songs?" "Yes, old modern songs, too. Is there no beauty in this?" and rising, he went to the piano and sang Pollock's noble song, in which a modern fox has once caught the chivalrous spirit of the past.

"It is not mine to sing the stately grace, The sweet soul-beaming in my lady's face. But mine it is to follow in her train, In his beloved pleasure or pain. Turn about, altar love, sweet frank, And with her kind distant reverent."

After he had been kind to Frank Anstruther, there was no startling beauty in his face, but he had in an altogether uncommon degree that highly-bred grace, without which no man should care to sing those courtly words. When his song closed, even Mrs. Rolt could not help admitting, "Yes, that is best."

"Whatever Kitty thought it was left unsaid, but there was no reassurance for Jim Combe in the cold bow with which she bade him good-night."

In her heart she began to hate "young people." Without them there had been peace at the ranch, whereas now it was almost as bad as being in love again herself.

But this thought brought a smile to her sweet face. There had never been any rival in her case to big Frank Rolt. She scarcely thought the man existed who could have been.

The night after Jim's departure there was no music at the ranch, and the music the next morning was neither of man's making nor to his liking. For days past the great red "Horsefords" had been crowding in closer and closer round the corral, and for five days the clouds had grown more and more murky overhead, whilst a bitter wind kept whining uneasily amongst the sage brush and the willows. Perhaps the absence of the men really accounted for the gloom which seemed closing round the ranch, and yet there seemed more than mere loneliness in the depression which took hold on those who had been left behind.

The last golden leaf had fallen from the cottonwoods along the creek bottoms, and now and again dry balls of sage brush would race and bound along upon the uplands, driven by unseen wind devils, or the trees in the recently burnt patch of pine timber just beyond the corral would for minutes break out with a great groaning and grinding of limbs. But these things only occurred by fits and starts. The strangeness of them was due only to the fact that there seemed to be no storm account for them. Such storms, there were, were purely local and short lived, until the Wednesday morning.

Then the dawn broke in weird fashion, with such devilish storm lights, such unearthly and terrifying shadows as are only seen on the sea or in the prairies, and the first act of winter began.

In half an hour every loose thing about the ranch had been blown from its position. A wagon which the Indians had left out was lifted right over and lay bottom upwards in the yard. Faces which the biggest of the bulls had respected, were laid flat as if they had been hit card houses.

The little creek which a week before had threatened to run dry became a swollen torrent. Pieces of board and tin cans whirled about in the wind, battered and rattled against the walls, whilst the old house itself throbbed and hummed like an organ, and from time to time an earth-shaking report announced the downfall to some great Douglas pine in the slashing. Whilst the storm lasted there was no sun. The racing clouds blotting him out, that a vague dull light prevailed, such as might have existed when the Spirit moved on the face of the waters.

The three in the house cowered at the windows, and watched the desolate scene with that feeling half of pleasure, half of awe, which is natural to human beings safely entrenched in a cosy, storm-proof house when storms rage without, until a misérable looking object with lowered head and straining hide came trembling past the windows towards the barn.

"Oh, my poor little Mary! Mary, look. There is my fawn. Those Indians must have let it out."

"Well, she can go into the barn if she wants to. I think she is going." But the fawn, like other only half-civilized things, had lost its wild ways, before it had acquired the sense of the domestic beast, and now stood shivering in the very eye of the wind, looking for some human being to take care of it, instead of taking care of itself. It let out a poor, miserable bleat. Do you mind, dear?"

"No, of course not; though I don't suppose that it will come in. Try if you can tempt it, Mr. Anstruther."

With a piece of bread in his hand to entice the fawn, Anstruther went to the main door, glad to do anything to win a smile from his offended lady, but the very elements warred against the unfortunate lover that day. As soon as the latch gave under his hand, the great door burst inward with such a noise that the fawn fled, whilst Anstruther himself was sent reeling back and forth, and pictures, stick racks, and bear hides clattered and careered along the floor.

As usual in this confounded country he had made a mess of it. No one but a fool, he reflected, would have tried to open a door on the weather side of the house, when it would have been much easier to have brought the deer round to the sea side, but it was too late to think of that now. He had to bring that beast in. He simply dived not face those two women without going to, with a glance at the damage he had done, he plunged recklessly into the storm bareheaded, dragging the great door to behind him.

It required all Anstruther's strength to shut the door, and for a moment he had to cling to the handle of it for support before he could make good his footing against the wind. Like most newly-arrived Englishmen he was still particular about his attire, but in less time than it takes to write it, the glory of his boiled shirt and smart collar had gone; his riding breeches, billowed in the latest fashion, were clinging to him like the skin of a fish, his long coat-tails were performing like a giddy wind-mill, and his whole appearance was such as to justify the belief that the ladies at the window were conversing with laughter. As he crossed the paddock it occurred to him that Mrs. Rolt was signalling to him to come back, but he was uncertain and in any case he did not mean to go back without that infernal little beast which tempted him yard by yard across the corral, and towards the patch of smoking ground in the distance.

"Surely," he thought, "the ladies were signalling to him, but he could not understand what they meant. They were calling, but the window was closed, which in itself would have been enough to drown their voices, without the deafening din all around him."

He was within arm's length now, and he made a spring at the fawn's collar, and in a moment he was in the air, his head so that he only frightened the beast, which in a few bounds reached the timber. But here he paused, as if it was as much afraid to go forward as to come back. Of course, Anstruther followed it. As he reached the edge of the brute a dry bough no thicker than his little finger, whirled out of one of the tops and struck him across the forehead, and the force of it drove him from so small a thing should have warned him, but at that moment victory seemed within his grasp. The fawn, frightened by something the man neither saw nor understood, hesitated, until with a quick leap Anstruther sprang in and gripped the leather collar round its neck.

It would be a curious thing, the man thought, who would loose his grip on the fawn's collar, when he was safely in his mistress's keeping, and as he thought formed itself in his mind something happened.

At the very last the half-breeds stopped and consulted. Those two men, as if time was of no value, consulted and argued, and then one of them went to the house for a saw. That was the most insufferable five minutes of all to Kitty, and when the log were free, the log did not rise an inch. Another cut had to be made, and all the agony of waiting endured again. Even when a six-foot length had been sawn out of the pine, those two imbeciles could not lift it, a log which Jim would have carried on his shoulders.

It was well for Anstruther that they could not. But for the broken limb on the underside which had injured itself by being cut through, and held now like a tap root, Anstruther would long since have learned the great secret.

Thanks to that bough he was held in a vice but not crushed, as a Douglas crushes what it falls upon. With levers and bars and all the ingenuity of practised loggers the men at last pried up the log sufficiently for those three, and drew out their man, still uncertain whether he was dead or alive.

With gentle strength they unclenched the long white fingers from the fawn's collar. Poor beast! At any rate, would not come in again from that storm. The tree had broken its back, and a merciful axe stroke had split its graceful head from end to end, and yet Kitty, who at another time would have wept for a day over her pet, had now no thought of it.

On a rude stretcher, improvised by the Chinaman, whilst the Indians chopped Mrs. Rolt and the three men carried Anstruther to the house and laid him in the warm, firelit room on the Boss's bed, and then the greatest terror, the only one of ranch life, faced those women. As long as all goes well to those who are country bred, there is a subsiding in the enforced separation from the town and its thousand and one conveniences. Every difficulty is a joke to be laughed at, a puzzle which natural ingenuity will deal with in overcoming. You can do without the shops and the theatres, you can hold service if you want to, and the strong man needs no policeman to protect him; but the time comes when even a man cannot do without the doctor, when he would give all that the world holds for someone who could tell him what to do to save one dear life.

Anstruther might be dying for some little help which they could have given him if only they knew what was the matter with him, but they did not know.

There was no broken bone that they could find, no bleeding wound for them to staunch, and yet whenever consciousness returned to him, at the end of half an hour or so, he would find each faint seemed more and more like death.

The resources of the ordinary ranch in such cases as this are pitifully inadequate. As a rule the wife knows a little about the treatment of ordinary accidents and the simpler ailments, and in the house there is generally some book which professes to be a substitute for the physician. You have only to turn to it in an emergency, to discover how little there is to justify its claims.

Mrs. Rolt read such a volume from cover to cover, only to fall back in despair upon such simple remedies as warmth and quiet. She could only give nature a fair chance. Probably she could have done no better, and half the doctor's success at least depends upon the patient's faith in him. You see your good folk at home boast yourselves of your medical knowledge, in which you are only an occasional pride and a very little serious interest, allow something not only for the courage of the men who help out fresh dominions for you all over the world, but something too for the martyrdoms of women who watch through the long nights of lone lands, growing old between a sun's setting and a sun's rising, whilst all that makes life valuable for them is fading away under their eyes, for want of that which to you is but a natural accessory of your every-day life.

Through that long and wild night those two women watched; whilst it seemed to them that the winds clattered round the house for the prey which had escaped them.

Towards morning, Mrs. Rolt, who had been dozing in a chair by the fire-side, started up.

"Is he sleeping now, Kitty?" "No, he is pretending to, but I can see his poor lips are pressed together. I don't believe he has slept once since they carried him in," she whispered.

"Oh, nonsense. He was sleeping nicely through the night while I watched."

"He was charming, Mary, so that we should not worry. Let's brave it out," and bending over her head, she pressed her fair head upon Mrs. Rolt's shoulder to smother the sobs which shook her.

Mrs. Rolt's arm wound round the girl, and drew her gently to her knee, soothing her quietly, whilst a very wistful motherly look came into her own eyes as they gazed at him.

This woman had a right to know what she was letting her head be served him very faithfully, and she knew him now.

Whatever had been her dreams for Jim Combe she recognized that they had only been dreams. Whether he lived or died, the man lying there with strained pale face, would always hold the first place in Kitty Clifford's heart, whilst she whispered to her younger sister, and she will say him for you. If only God would send our men home."

blizzard, could neither be anything. "Not yet, dear, I am afraid cannot be more than a now," and her own heart wondering whether it was with her own man.

But the great bounds, the stables, contradicted the low growl, and then a chof Lupus, and Venom, bayed some as, dim and indistinct driving sleet, half a dozen emerged and dismounted at once before Mrs. Rolt could get down, and all her wayward gait, was clinging to her arm, and dragging him house.

For the others she had even the Boss, but only, flying in the storm, she old friend, crying:

"Oh, Jim, Jim; you do come quickly. I wait you. And Jim fell into his one."

"It was so natural to this spoiled child, who to him in trouble, that he self and answered:

"What is it, dear? I want Jim to do for you. No, no, not a second. He drew him away from which he would have left the storm for no other pet."

"Oh, Jim, he has waited thought that you would He's almost dead, Jim," a mouth quivered in a weak him wife.

"Who is nearly dead climbing the stairs with with clanking spurs and 'Frank' Mr. Anstruther. Jim's face contracted a cal pal, but he control and said no word until sick man's room, where comed him, silently."

One glance at that face on the pillow, but devil for good. Here we down, and all the woman's fellow's heart came to once."

It was a marvel how his limbs moved now. Eye Mexican spurs ceased to sick bed.

"What's the trouble, riding job for amusement. The sick man's eyes involuntarily 'effort' to spasm of pain across his forehead. 'Lia, lia, old chap, what the trouble is. You mind leaving the room, rough on him, Kitty,' a her gently before him to When they had gone, off the bedclothes and, might be, felt for the in; not see."

"How did it happen?" Anstruther told him. "I see, I see," he mut a foolish thing to do to bruise when the trees w But then he would have self for Kitty. That mference.

"Don't hurt any whils does it?" Hurts considerably. The sick man nodded, hurt "considerable."

"Well, so far as I can no great damage done smash up. Three ribs, four, stove in, but so machinery ain't in again, about in a week. get Protheor from Soe splice you up a bit. You ladies."

They came in followed "Is it, is it anything v whispered Kitty, taking in hers."

"It ain't no undertaker what you mean, Miss K. 'Twon't take so as a broken heart, and easy. It's just three or in. If you'll get me so dages and something at waistcoat of, I'll cinch he, can't do no harm u Protheor to fix him. Your job is to keep him want him well again se holding both her hands her to the chair by his aid left her there."

It was Jim's act of re he did it, as he did ever and without protest.

CHAPTER I  
A Ride for L

"Where are you going ed the Boss, who had fo out of the sick room. Jim came back from h a start and turned a ve haggard face to his old."

"To Soda Creek to fetc you can spare me."

"But you can't go yet, had a bite of food to-day Anstruther's infurles do be so very serious."

"Can't be something in the way in which she turned upon what she the woman who had just hardest blow of his life."

"Oh, nonsense, man, take her chance like tr stest on your having son you go."

"If you insist, Jim, with a queer laugh some cold grub and a lit cartridge bag for me. the horse plays out."

"What do you mean tidden the tails of the stock. Will you take th Anstruther's?"

"No, I'll take the you the only horse that cou never will be."

"That devil! He is never will be. May this will break him. calling to the men to e a beast which no one e led to handle, a young e tiff as Luffey and as."

When Luffey hurried on the cartridge case and men were trying to ho demon, as every wore hi loose litter of the yard the frightened horse's rain lashed his blo

CHAPTER II  
The Storm

CHAPTER III  
The Storm

CHAPTER IV  
The Storm

CHAPTER V  
The Storm

CHAPTER VI  
The Storm

CHAPTER VII  
The Storm

Within a radius of twenty or feet of his flying heels it seemed for any living thing to come, and in time he might quiet down a little. "Clutch the bag on for good tight. Boss. It might get shook out of it."

Rolt obeyed, and Jim shook himself to try the fastening.

"Nothing loose, is there? steady, you devil," he there horse's head, which bared its teeth from him across the corral, dragging the four men with it.

For a quarter of an hour Jim mounted the ruck, but by striking him and kicking the savage brute treated every effort.

"Guess we'll have to throw him all, but it's a pity to take any horse of him that way," and then another of Jim's voice came from a higher level.

"Jim, what's the matter with speaking, and with a thick-like flying heels like a porcupine. It was done so natural to this spoiled child, who to him in trouble, that he self and answered:

"What is it, dear? I want Jim to do for you. No, no, not a second. He drew him away from which he would have left the storm for no other pet."

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## BEARDS AND KINGS

George V. is the First of His Name. Not Clean Shaven.

It was often remarked at the coronation of Edward VII. that he was the bearded King for nearly two hundred years. The ill-fated Prince Charles I. was his immediate predecessor in this respect, and he carried the throne in 1625, whereas the coronation succeeded his mother in 1626. Charles was the last of the Kings of the house of Stuart to wear a beard for any long time. To represent Elizabeth or Shakespeare's Hamlet, or even the uncrowned King of the pointed beard, and to wear a long line of his own hair, though he wore his own hair, was a pretty long curl in a hair-dress, but only hair on his face, but not a mustache. None of the successors of Edward VII. had a beard, and the last of the Kings of the house of Stuart to wear a beard was James II. William III. all the Kings of the house of Hanover, and the present King, have been clean-shaven subjects. There was a time when a beard was not only a sign of manhood, but also a sign of wisdom.

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