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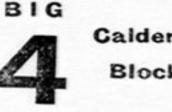
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(AUTHOR OF "GOLD, GOLD IN CARIBOO," ETC.)

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CHAPTER XVII.

In order to keep Anstruther amused and quiet, Mary Rolt had dinner served that night for the four of them in the bedroom, busying herself in making the pretty place as vivid a contrast as possible to the grim world

A wood fire glowed merrily on the wide hearth, and the light of it was reflected by the silver and glass that nestled cosily in the folds of the rosecolored cretonne hangings.

Frank?" she asked with her hand on the last of them.

"Not unless you wish it."

drawn. I always snuggle into bed more cosily when I can peep out into a bitter night like that. Can you see down the valley from where you lie without moving? A peep at it will make the fire feel warmer and the room more homelike.'

pairs, Cement Curbing or and then, turning to Kitty, who had just entered the room, bade her b

"And see, my girl," she added "that is not the way to lay a table," George Whitmore and then with a few deft touches re-

> Kitty for the nonce had donned cap and apron, and Anstruther was not the first to discover more charm and coquetry in a maid's cap than in her mistress's toilette.

"What do you mean, Katherine?" "Where I was last, the family had

to be waited on when it had a party but when it was by itself it stretched like this," and reaching across the able she possesed herself of a sale

lose," retorted Mrs. Rolt, severely all lady and no help, like Miss Mo-

"What was her story?" asked An-

fortnight their sister had discovered in headlong flight. exactly ninety-nine different things, guessing who it was who cleaned the boots, she put hers outside her bedroom door every night."

"And? Oh, and she married, of I shall be all right." course, and her brothers do just as "Will you swear to keep st they did whilst she was with them, Frank?" except that her husband cleans her

Mrs. Rolt's libel on lady-helps. Instead, he was gazing intently through entered the room. the uncurtained window at the foot of his bed, to which the others had their

valley to-night, Mrs. Rolt?" he asked. "In the hay meadows? No one." "Is not that a fire? Surely, my eyes | ver which hung there.

are not playing me false again?" There are two of them. Do you see too bright. She could see nothing.

then turned sharply to his wife, h s house where the stores were kept. face working with some feeling which for a moment. Will you excuse us, hit or missed The main thing was to Frank?" and laying his hand on Kit- recall the men, and almost before she

pens. I rely on you," and then he fol- voice hailed her.

off to the mess house to get the half- tallic ring of a rifle.

He was running downstairs as he up to the house.

Mary Rolt's heart sank as she saw any more harm. him snatch the rifle, but she did his room. There was no need for any blazing stacks.

explanation there. glare of red light proclaimed the work let him in. that was on hand, even if the noise sharp sentences of the mounting men suddenly, and clinging to him. had not told the tale.

"Is it shoot, Al?" they heard some-

hoofs told that the horse had "got." "Never mind the near stacks, boys;

are worth to the first that is not lightas he galloped away with his men. At the back of the ranch and on straight."

both sides of it lay a great enclosed The old man nodded and went out.

Jim only walked slowly and limped sheet, size about 18x15 inches, a At the back of the ranch and on straight." each fenced in, the feed upon which key.

a hard winter should come. There are years, many of them, luckily, in which these stacks need not be touched. In an open winter the

times lose every head of stock.

but Dick Rolt was not such a fool as to take any chances where the safety of his cattle was concerned. Three years' hay was stacked in the thousand acres, and if none of it should be used the next year's crop would be cut and stacked just the same.

The sight which met the eyes of would have been weirdly beautiful if store. the meaning of it had not been so which stack after stack burst into front of the mess house.

The heavy Scotch mist with which the valley was filled—a freezing mist, She curtseyed to him with a laugh, which was almost rain-was crimson quick.

> out black and exaggerated in size, in fairly drowns you after that glare," be heard where the watchers stood. Down in the middle of the valley ran a chain of red fire, whilst the warn the Faircloughs." walls of it were still darkness made darker by contrast, and in this, ima- He's up half way to Grouse Creek by gination could paint the twelve or now if the Injins haven't got him." fourteen men who rode with their their hearts.

took hold, but though Mary Rolt held | "Not whilst them illuminations is her breath to listen, there came no turned on," said Al. I guess you can

minutes since the last blazed up." Anstruther, for God's sake, don't try | ed to where something lay in the sha-

"On, she came out to help the poor to move. You can't help now," was dear boys, her brothers. They could Mrs. Rolt's only answer, and then she not afford to hire any help, and just ran through her husband's bath-room pigged until she came. At the end of a and they heard her taking the stairs

"Phon, oh, Phon," they heard her each of which was, "the only thing call, "bar the kitchen window, quest she never could do," and actually, Indians come cut your throat," a d whilst she spoke they heard her turning the keys in the main doors and putting up the great bars. "Run to her, Kitty, and help her.

But Anstruther was not listening to moments later Mrs. Rolt, Kitty, and the frightened Chinese cook

"They can't get in now unless they burst the doors," sobbed Mrs. Rolt, breathless with her exertions. "Who would be camping down the Watch that back door, Kitty, whilst call the men," and she ran to her husband's room again for the revol-

Tearing away the curtains, and traces they had left. The Boss turned lazily in his chair. throwing the little window open, she "Yes, that is a fire sure enough. peered out, but the light inside was

that little one just beyond the first?' | "Put the lamp out, Kitty," she call-Suddenly Rolt's face changed. He ed, and as the light went out in obesprang to the window, took one dience to her order, she saw dimly searching glance down the valley, and something moving in the shadow of a

"Mary, dear, I want to speak to you empty. It mattered little whether she

Once outside the door, his manner care. Don't shoot any more," and changed. "It's our stacks, little wo then for a moment there was bedlam man. Those devils are firing our win | in the darkness outside, horses galter feed. Keep cool and run now and loping amongst the buildings, and

breeds. Keep your heart up; we'll After that the main body of gallop- Combe. stop them before they can do much ing hoofs seemed to recede towards

from its rack as he passed out of the tern, my girl. They have all gone, I corrals.

bidding as he would have had her do voice, which Mary Rolt had never him as he slouched along without a it, with the utmost coolness, and when heard before in all the years she had sign of haste, without a shout to tell the men had rushed out after their known him, but then she had never that he had come. Surely never any master, she went back to the sick- seen him before in the light of his | man walked as slowly as Jim Combe

"Did you see anyone when you express messenger returned. Through the uncurtained window a fired." he asked, as soon as she had

of saddling up and the hurry of hoofs Oh, Dick, I have not killed anyone, tone. She expected every one beneath the window and the short have I?" she cried, breaking down show his excitement as she did her:

"Shoot? Aye, shoot to kill, curse have not hit any one, more's the pity. to boil up a gallop at the finish lik them. Git, you devil," and a clatter of Where did you think you saw them?" "Over there by the store-house."

ed, and-" the Boss's voice died out Al, touching his arm and whispering.

yourself, Boss." "Where did you find it?" "In the door of the store-house." Rolt looked down at it for a mo-

"Guess so. Women had ought to do their own chores. I ain't got no u for Injins round a ranch. They'v got all the rifles."

"What?" "All them spare rifles and three or four dozen boxes of cartridges. should say, though some of them won't help em much. The rifles are forty-fives, and half the cartridges were for your fifty hundred and ten Guess we bustled em a bit or they wouldn't have made such a fool break

as that." Whilst they were speaking Mar; Rolt had remained unnoticed wit them. Now her husband saw her and bade her run up stairs and tell the

other two that it was all over and no arm done. When she had gone master and an faced each other for some min

ites in silence. "Can't save the stacks, Al?" "That don't make no odds. We've

"I suppose so, if we are lucky nough to live to want it." Oh, we shall. We'll pull through all right, but I wish the women folk were out of this, at Sody Creek or Vic-

"You think it is war, then?" "You bet it's war. What did they want them rifles for. They on y these who watched at the window burned the stacks to get a show at the

hideous. The night was one which the two listening heard the beat of not only precluded any possibility of the returning hoofs, and before long accidental ignition, but made it diffi- about half of the men of the ranch cult to understand the rapidity with reined up their lathering horses in

"Did you get any of 'em?" asked Al. "Devil a hoof." "You got sick of the hunt mighty

"Yes," drawled one of the boys. "I Over twenty stacks, beginning with ain't almighty stuck on night huntin'. the one nearest to the ranch house. Once you're over the hog's back it's were in flames, one here and there darker nor the ways of a provincial which had failed to ignite standing politician. It's so blanked dark it the fierce light made by its fellows, and he looked towards the blazing whilst the roar of the burning could stacks. "The Injins kinder sunk out of sight in it."

"We shall have to send some one to "That's done, Boss. I sent Dan.

"Thank you, Al. I think two of you weapons in their hands and murder in had better come in and sleep in the house to-night, just to reassure the Once or twice a figure was seen ladies. The rest of you had better near the farthest of the stacks, thrown | sleep with your horses, and there will out in bold relief for a moment as the have to be a couple on the look out devil's work succeeded and the flames all night. They might try to rush us."

sleep solid to-night. When it's dark "Twenty-three, Mary, but it is ten it will be different. But I'll see to the look-outs, Boss, when we've put "Stop where you are, Kitty: Mr. them two out of sight," and he point-

> dow of the stables. "It was a pity as it was Kineeshaw," he added. "There'll be no let up not until they wipe us out or some on lets daylight into old Khelowna. He

> > CHAPTER XVIII.

thought a heap of Kineeshaw."

That night the watchers watched in vain. The three and twenty stacks of good hay which should have been turned into beef at thirty or forty dollars a head, flared up and then died down into clear red hearts of fire, and in the white day light were nothing but grey spots on the home meadow. They had been licked up as clean as the mist was by the sun, and left little more trace than the Indians who had lighted them.

These had vanished utterly. Two spots of fresh turned earth, outside the corrals, might suggest the recent presence of the Chilcotens to those who knew what lay below, but these and the charred railings where the stacks had stood were all the

From the hog's back to the black timber of the enclosing hills there was no sign of a camp fire, no hint of a man's presence, and one by one the scouts sent out from the ranch came back with the same story. The Indians had been about a score in number, and were not now to be seen, neither had they left any trail to say which way they had gone. The most experienced among the trackers guessed that they had scattered, and it was impossible to say where they would reunite. But Jim would be back, said the men, and then they could make up their minds what to

hour: though even an ordinary rider in ordinary haste might have been tell the men in the dining-room. I'm men running, and twice the sharp me- back before the second night fell. The dark came again, and with it no Jim

Neither did morning bring him, and the hills, but the Boss and old Al rode it was not until late afternoon on the fourth day that two men walked slowspoke, and snatched a Winchester | "Open the door and give me a lan- ly before their led horses into the

Kitty, whose impatience was devouring her, saw them come. Jim was smoking, of course, and staring about never any man looked less like th

"He doesn't seem in a hurry," said Kitty, and there was a world of dis-

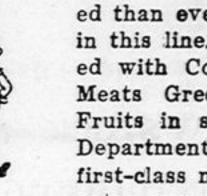
"Did you ever expect Jim to look as "Steady, there; steady, little wo- if he hurried?" asked Mrs. Rolt, who man. Keep your nerve a bit longer. was leaning over the girl's shoulder You are doing splendidly. No, you at the window. "Did you want Jim the driver of an Irish jaunting car? Look at the horses."

They indeed told a tale of haste in you can't save them. Ride for all you the time. Lucky we tumbled to their the past, haste of which they were no game. Just go and look at the house, longer capable, and possibly any man with a view to effect might have "say nothing if the missus has shot dragged his limbs as the horses drag

a long parallelogram, and down the again for the lantern. When he re- the boys and to help him off-saddle middle of it ran a chain of hay stacks, turned again he handed the Boss a the roan. Then he walked quietly to the house with the doctor, not stop depended the safety of Rolt's stock if "I thought as you allus kept that ping to hear much of what old Al had to tell him. But he managed to take in a grea deal in those quiet glances which Kit

ty resented so much. "Any one hurt?" were his first time to open his mouth.

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CLIVE PHILLIPPS WOLLEY

reserve or nay:

"Do you want all the blinds drawn,

"Well, then, I'll leave this one un-

"It always feels homelike where you

arranged some of the silver.

"Does the family expect to be waited on or does it stretch?" she asked,

"rou went as a lady-help, I sup

backs turned.

ty's shoulder as he passed, he whis had ceased firing a horse's hoofs pered, "Keep him quiet whatever hap- thundered through the corrals, and a

cattle are carried without having re- ment. "The old devil," he muttered. sort to the store laid up for a hard "Jest so. But how did he come to words to Al, before the old man had spell, and in consequence some men get it?" trust to luck and keep little or no "Old Mary must have stolen it from

These are the men who fail in the cattle business. Sooner or later a deep snow comes; so deep that the cattle cannot paw it away to get at the grass beneath, and then the men who have not provided against such It means ruin to the improvident,

"I swear. Run, dear." The girl obeyed him, and a few

At once her revolver rang out, shot after shot, until every chamber was

"That you shooting, Polly? Take

think, except two, and they won't do There was a hardness in the Boss's

"I think so, but I am not certain, appointment and bitterness in

"Ah! But they could not get in in

to the fresh earth. "None of our folk be bought for the price. Continued on page 7.