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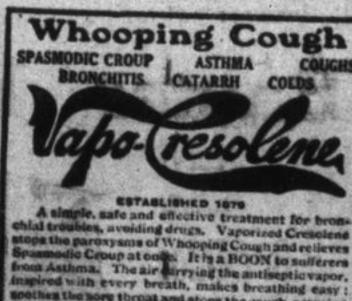
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(AUTHOR OF "GOLD, GOLD IN CARISOO," ETC.)

CHAPTER L A Bad Start

"I am afraid that you are a poe Miss Clifford." "What do you mean, Mr. Anstru-

"To be polite to a young lady with an imagination. Did you not tell me when I was in Larkshire, that it never rained in British Columbia? Don't you remember how blue your sales were when you were wix thousand miles away from them? May I be permitted to ask if this is a fair sample of your Eden "

The speaker, a tall, slight man, of not more than twenty-three, stood beside an up-country cart, the collar of his waterproof coat turned over his this darkness." ears, a wet cigarette drooping from his lips, and an icy sleet storm driving into the back of his neck, in spite of his endeavors to keep it out.

Every line of his thin, well-bred face expressed discomfort and disgust whilst the smartness of his get-up emphasized the roughness of his suring, in spite of the disadvantage of sex. a foot's pace. seemed infinitely more in their

"Yes, but we admit it, though never saw anything like this in that much-maligned country. I suppose this is what you call a blizzard," and he dug his heel irritably into horse's ribs to turn that animal's quar-

ters more emphatically upon the slant-- At this moment a man rode up on a ragged-looking cayuse, plain headed, and not too straight in the shoulder, but quick and handy as a cat. This man looked at the speaker with

a scarcely concealed sneer upon his

weather-stained face. "It's no good staying here, Mrs. Rolt," he said to the girl's companion. "This won't let up before dark, and it's going to turn cold. Shouldn't wonder if we got the blizzard that gentle man talks about.

"How far is it to Brown's, Jim?" "Can't say exactly. Pretty Dick says we are off the trail. I guess he' What is this then that we hav

been following? "A watering trail seemingly. I've not been this way myself for years, but the tracks all break up different ways a bft farther on.

The month was early October and in October the weather may be perfect upon the northern cattle lands or it may not. There is a whisper always; sometimes a threat of winter in th air. Even in summer, in spite of the giorious sunshine, you cannot quite for get that winter reigns here at least

half the year. That morning, the long undulating uplands had been stretches of sunlit purple, royal in coloring, boundless in extent, with fair broideries of pur gold where the cottonwoods shed their leaves in the little wet gullies; now. in the grey of coming night, these uplands were wild, colorless and desolate as a stormy sea, void and without

It was a dreary outlook for the two women in an open rig, drawn by two itterly worn out horses, but it was Mr. Anstruther who resented it.

"Do you mean to say, Combe, that you don't know where we are?" h asked impatiently. "We ain't in England, Mr. Anstru-

ther, and we forgot to order milestones when we heard you were coming," re-Rolt put in hastfly, "we are in Jim's own country, and if we are off the

trail for a moment, it does not matter a little bit. Which way, Jim?" Jim's face relaxed at once. Like high-spirited horse he flinched at the least touch of the curb, but the light hands of his Bose's wife could do what they liked with Jim Combe, the fore

man of the Risky Ranche. "I'm afraid we can't make camp to night where we meant to. I got fooled by the weather myself. Didn't calculate on a rainstorm before morning nor on its turning so plaguey dark but I knew you won't whine if you do get wet. You can't hunt and keep dry all the time. If you let the Indian and follow me, I'll get you to Riley's cow camp in no time. It's rough shel-ter and bad going, but it's better than this," and he shook his brone and moved on shead of the cart.

"Do you mind very much, Kitty?" Mrs. Rolt asked her friend. "Not a bit, dear, if you can keep the peace between those two. They're just spoiling for a row. What a vile tem-per Jim has developed since I went back to the Old Country. It's not like

Mrs. Rolt smiled mysteriously ind the folds of her hood, but a spoke only to the horses. "Get up, mare. Keep close to He can see through anything." Kitty looked a question, but Mrs.

Rolf's face was so innocent of any arriers penses that the girl said noththe long and dreamy drive over unten prairie, into and out of ravine

which by daylight would have seemed to English people impossible for any However, rauche horses and ranche

After an hour of this the horses bebecame hall, stinging like the lash of

"Do you really think that it is

ble English hunter being as much sen in this country as its rider. "Do you think that it is any good to stop here, Mr. Anstruther?"

The figure only half visible in th darkness ah ad, reined in his horse and waited. He was too far in front to have heard, and yet Mrs. Rolt was afraid. Jim's hearing, like all his faculties, was keen as that of a wad don't believe that that fellow

knows a bit where he is," muttered Anstruther angrily. "I don't suppose that he does exactly, but he will find his way if we let him alone. None of us could do that in

"We have known him a long time. Haven't we, Kitty?"

"Well, your horses seem to have had enough of it, if you have not, Mrs. Rolt," he said at last, as the balked resolutely at the foot of an exceptionally steep pitch. "Get up. you brutes," and the angry man laid his whip savagely across the quarters of the nearest horse. It winced but stood atill

Again the whip felt, and the horser backed so that the cart nearly turned

"Stop that, Mr. Anstruther." There was an angry ring in the lady's

"Pardon me. Miss Kitty and your self cannot stay here all night. The mounting, he proceeded to make them. But he was hardly on his feet sooner than Mrs. Rolt was out of the cart. and as his hand rose with the whip in it, he was caught by the wrist, and held as firmly by those thin white fingers as if it had been a man who

"You forget yourself, Mr. Anstruther. These are my horses, and I'll manage them myself. Go on and ask Jim to wait for us. Kitty and I can do without your help, thank you."

Anstruther raised life hat with a muttered apology, and did as he was bid, wishing himself back in England and pretty Mrs. Rolt at the devil. What, he asked himself, did women want in such a country? However, unless he was very much mistaken, she would be obliged to call him back to those horses before he had gone very far. Such ill-bred brutes could not be made to understand anything but the whip. But Mr. Frank Anstruther was : If you don't, I'll go home." very much mistaken. Polly Rolt was I not only a superb horsewoman-as good with cattle, her husband boasted. as any cow-boy-but she leved them and understood them; understood them because she loved them. So she stood there in the deep mud and driv ing hail, passing her fine, soft hands over the wealed flanks until some thrill of her gentle nature had soothed the ford?"

ears, and took the mare's muzzle into her arms, putting her face down beside the beast's, and talking tender

nonsense which beasts understand. "Drop the reins altogether, Dick," she commanded. "Now, old boy, come along, come on lassie, up there, up!" sorses going with her where no whip smoked the bacon, but would not toast could have driven them. From the top of the bank a tiny

speck of light showed ahead in the "Jim has camped, I think, "Just in time to save my life."

desolate voice from the on were pretty hard on him."

"Not half as bard on him as on poor Bess," snapped the other. "I know, dear, but he is in a strange country, and things are not goin; well for him. He isn't a muff, really, and vet everything has gone wrong for him

.What Polly Roll answered, only the winds know, but her face cleared as ters. He knew the air, though Anshe drew up at the little log cabin, be struther did not. side which stood two dripping horses.
"I made it, you see, Mr. Austruther," she called in the slang of the West. "so I will forgive you. Now come and salp us out of the cart. Kitty is too

water logged to move without essis putting his waterproof over the wheel. Do you know, Mr. Anstruther, when he selved Mrs. Rolt daintily to the ground, as if her skirt had not been

Kitty, her face flushed rose pink, and Kitty counted them one day when she her eyes bright with the weather, made was in short frocks, and we never erhaps absolutely necessary on the until that poor young Webster took hi Never mind Polly. She doesn't found out. Shall I tell, Jim?"

CHAPTER II. Two Stages of Development

has they should be, besides which, as a matter of fact, he had generally left "Not that strap Mr. Anatruther.

is, this is the may." But before Mrs. Rold could show ilm, the allent figure, which had just aken the saddles off the riding horass, ook charge, the wet straps yielded as f by magic to the cow-boy's fingers, and the beests were led off by the Inilan to some unseen corral.

"Where have you put Ruddygore?" "In the corral with the others. Why? Do you want him inside?"

On such a night Anstruther might have been forgiven for thinking that the hut was none too good for his wellared hunter. it certainly was not as good as the loose box to which that valuable beast had been accustomed. but Anstruther saw that there was no help for it. Ruddygore would have take his chance with the rest.

Just make yourself pleasant to the ladies. I'll be through in a minute." "You might cut some wood for us, Mr. Anstruther," called Kitty from the doorway. "I should love a great roar

around for something to chop. "There are some pines in that last

Through the dark and not quite certain of his direction, the unhappy tchee But the girl had nothing to say, tchaco (tenderfoot) splashed his way, Perhaps her sympathy and her exper- and once in the gully put als back into tence were not at one. Anstruther the work. It was not his fault that the growled something under his breath. axe never bit twice in the same place: and the procession moved on again at it was to his credit that he kept on hammering, unfil at last a green pine,

> With infinite toll he trimmed it, cut it into lengths, and then packed it back in three trips to the cabin. Jim had been waiting for the last two trips, and as soon as Anstruther pat his are down, he took it up and disappeared for five minutes, bringin back a huge burnt "stick" on his shou

There was rather more wood in that burnt "stick" than Austruther has brought in his three trips.

Anstruther's green pine, for fire-dogs, tossed all the rest of that gentleman's hard-earned loads out of the way dry log, hung the billy on an impro vised gallows, and began to cut the

It was all so simple and so quickly done when you knew how to do it, but it was annoying to have worked for half an hour to so purpose. "I don't seem to be much good," said

dr. Anstruther. Mrs. Rolt laughed and shook her head at the cowbov.

"How should he? chop wood before "You don't say!

Mrs. Rolt ignored the question. show Mr. Anstruther how to do things. "Right away?"

ers cut as thin and as daintily toasted as if they had been prepared by a professional cook. "Won't you have some, Miss Clif

Then she stroked their drooping was deferential, if not nervous, and, seeing her advantage, womanlike, Miss Kitty looked at the bacon and sniffed. "It's too greasy, Jim, I wonder if

he led the way up the steep bank, the which shot out, burned his fingers and

"Half a shake, partner. Let me fix that fire for you. Now go shead." seas, and sizzled merrily, but again it was though she laughed, there was a strong under-current of aunoyance in her

to hum that popular American air-"You ain't no good, You c'aint cut wood, Just kiss yourself good-bye.' The slight upward curl at the cor-

ting away her plate. "I know that women ought to wash up-" "I'll do that, Mrs. Rolt."

you won't, neither will you. ly. I know your idea of washing up. batched, lived alone, I mean, Jim had more crockery than all the other ranchers in the neighborhood put to But she tried not to laugh, and pretty gether. Fifty plates I think he had. eaning a trifle more than was knew what he wanted so many for mean it, but the Boss himself dare "Makes no odds," langhed Jim. "so not flog the horses when she is near." long as you ain't what Mr. Anstruther calls too poetic."

parted from his money.

"Well what can I do to help?" "You don't have to do anything.

ing fire. I am just perished, aren't you, Jary 97 Anstruther picked up the axe a little

"You trust him wonderfully, Mrs. sully we passed through," suggested

seven or eight inches in diameter, yielded to his perseverance.

With half a dezen deft strokes the cowboy cut two short lengths from chopped, split, and kindled his own

"Jim." she said, "you are an old bear. Why didn't you tell Mr. Austruther what kind of sticks to cut?" Jim grinned. "I guessed he'd have tnown that much

'Yes, right away.' "Stop and have its dinner first," he

Too the younger woman his manner

you would toast some of it a little more for me, Mr. Anstruther?"

Frank hurried to obey her, but the

A couple of touches in the right place from Jim's toe had created a glowing hollow, over which the bacon curled Jim's doing and not Frank's, so that Kitty's pretty brow was bent, and laugh when Mrs. Rolt began innocently

Now, I'm going to be lazy and have

(To be Continued.)

A Tragedy of Japan

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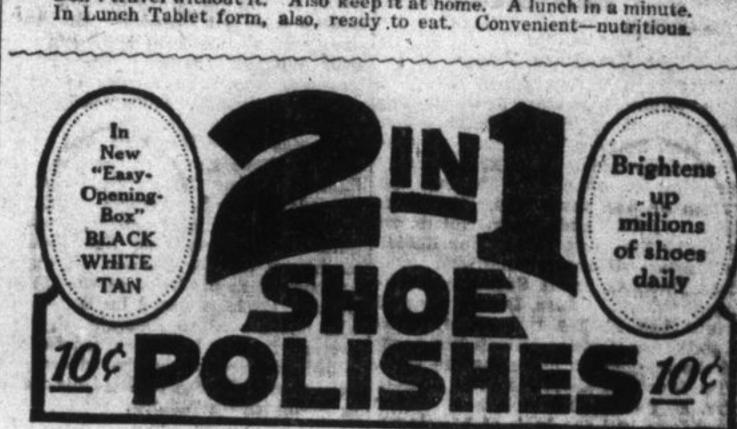
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