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—BY—
CLIVE PHILLIPS WOLLEY
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"Kitty knows it's true, and you don't contradict her. When we went to see how Mr. Webster was getting along, we found him eating his food off the kitchen table."

"Good place, too," chuckled Jim.

"Hasn't Jim left any plates for you?" we asked.

"Nitty three. Mrs. Rolt: that's the trouble. I've not had pluck enough to tackle them yet. Come, and I'll show you, and he took us to a pile as high as that, all dirty on both sides."

"Jim had had a clean side for one hundred and six meals. After that he let the horse and the crockery. Here, get the house and the crockery. Here, pretty quick, wash these things, please, and make them good and clean."

When the laugh against Jim had died out, and the Indian had carried off the crockery, Mrs. Rolt drew them all round the fire. The hall had stopped for a little while, and no wind touched them under the fly which Jim had rigged up on the lee side of the hut. With a good bed of pine brush on the ground, and a great fire of logs in front, there is no place cooler than a fly. Like a great reflector it catches all the light and heat and yet gives you all the benefit of the sweet fresh air.

That interior made a pretty contrast to the drear and lonesome uplands, in which there were nothing but grey shadows and silence, and the ruddy glow of the firelight throwing out the grey figures of the woman, and the amokers prone at their feet, in strong relief.

"Handsome as Polly Rolt was in a half-breedish, half-matronly way, the go and dash of the sportsman temperament of a few years of happy married life, it was no wonder that the men's eyes passed her pure, white, and as white as honey Kitty Clifford. Even the Chinese, who cooked for the ranche, worshipped her. She had been worshipped by everyone all her small, sporty life.

From the crimson Tam o'Shanter, which she had inherited from her saddle bags, to her gleaming gum boots, she was as dainty a little apple of discord as any fellow could be to men.

On anyone else, gum boots would have been a horror, shapeless, huge, mud-splattered. On her, they made you wonder where gum boots so astoundingly small and smart could have been made. Besides, they suggested an apology, if one were needed, for the extreme brevity of Kitty's skirts.

The fire was the most darling galleon in that crowd. It was he who touched Kitty's white throat with his blue fingers, he who lit the deep rose of her laughing eyes, who threw that velvety shadow which so emphasized the full curve of her saucy chin, and because even he became timid and uncertain in such a place, made you wonder who there that was a dimple just beyond the curve of those sweet red lips.

Yes, Kitty was pretty, and knew it perhaps too well, pretty with that face which has haunted England for so many happy centuries, giving a charm missing on the pillow behind old-fashioned fathers long ago, looking down perhaps as Guinevere or Gwendolyn upon the maddening youths of the tourney, or to-day making young men's pulses beat as they pass through the Army and Navy Store, where perhaps one meets more pretty women to be seen than in any other space on earth.

"Now sing, some one," ordered Mrs. Rolt.

"You don't mind my tobacco, do you?"

"No, of course not."

Taking his pipe from his mouth, Jim had started at Anstruther's words, and looked a surprised question at the Boss's wife. He had never dreamed that a man might not smoke in camp.

"All right, Jim, it's only Mr. Anstruther's English frills. Where we breathe we smoke. B. C. One of our band says. He's my law. But must I give you a lead?" and without waiting for an answer he began to sing the "Old Swanes River" in a rich, contra-voiced voice, which gave to the words an intangible pathos as they died away in that homely waste.

By a camp fire a song must have a chorus, without it the gregarious instinct of man is unsatisfied. Perhaps man sings, in part, because he is a little afraid of nature's silence, and of all choruses those French-Canadian choruses, roaring, rattling, boating ditties, of which Jim sang one or two, have done more to hunt the blue devils from the rivers of lower Canada than anything else in the world.

They are full of a spirit of a recklessly daring people, and Jim sang them with the spirit of an old-time voyager, and an accent which is not Parisian, was at least not London. It was noticeable in Jim that though his English was apt to stumble and wonder into all sorts of by-ways of slang, his French was good enough, and his English vocabulary at least as simple as an Englishman's. It was only with the constantly recurring phrases of every-day life that he and those of his kind played the mountebank. It was well for the more scholarly Anstruther perhaps that he did not follow the cowboy in any foreign tongue. Instead he sang them "The Home and the Meynell," and for the first time during that picnic Frank Anstruther placed himself, and was at home.

As he sang you knew what that spare horseman's figure meant; you realized where that lean high-bred face would seem a true type. Amongst those of such men and horses as that, dreaming as he sang, came a vision of an old, many-gabled house, set, as one's ancestors loved to set them, in a wooded hollow, all the lawns of it alive with hounds, and round the porch of it a group of such men and horses as that. Only England can turn out, amongst them all that duffer who could do nothing right in Canada, had been the best man in the county.

"Say," said Combe, when the song was finished, "ain't it pretty hard to find a fox nowadays in the Old Country?"

Anstruther came back from the Vale with a start, and perhaps because you cannot adjust yourself to your en-

vironments in five seconds, answered a little superciliously.

"No, why should it be. People don't shoot now for that."

"They are wild, Jim, like our Coyotes," put in Mrs. Rolt.

"There ain't no bounty on them then. Don't they play old Harry with the ranches?"

"If they do we pay for it."

"Oh, well you see, I ain't been in England myself. I was raised in Canada, and it is good enough for me. I knew there were plenty of foxes when my grandfather hunted the Old Larkshire, but I fancied that the people would have been too thick on the English, he grandsons to Sir Greyville's. This country is big enough, you'd think, but the Yanks have killed out the buffaloes, and will kill out most other things before they are through."

When my grandfather hunted the Old Larkshire, he was a fox-hunter, and I think, but the Yanks have killed out the buffaloes, and will kill out most other things before they are through."

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CHAPTER III.
Cattle Thieves

"Are you men up?"

The mist wreathes of early morning, the very last of them, were slowly trailing away like dainty long-sleeved gowns from the hollow below the cabin, and the sun was showing through the timber which crowned the rise to the east of the camp, when Mrs. Rolt's head was protruded from the cabin door to ask the above question.

But no one answered her. The fire had been made up and the men's blankets were hung on the bars of the corral, but there was no other sign of life if you except a grey bird like a jay, who was making a careful inspection of relics.

"No one here, Kitty," Mrs. Rolt called back into the cabin. "Now is our chance to make our toilet, and of course that dear old Jim has everything fixed for us, basin and water and towels. Makes me feel quite 'at home' as he'd say."

"How do you know that it was Jim?"

"How do I know, you ungrateful girl? Hasn't Jim done these things ever since we came to the country. You don't suppose that your chum would ever have thought of it?"

"I think that you are very hard on my new chum," said the girl, showing a delightfully rosy face in a mist of disordered hair.

"And I think that you are hard on your old friend," retorted Mrs. Rolt. "She had almost said more than she had intended to, but caught herself up in time and buried her face healthily in the basin to hide her confusion."

"Well," blowing the soapsuds out of her eyes and shaking the water from her wet hair.

"What an object you do look dear. It's lucky your fringe is natural."

"Is that all you wanted to say, Miss? I am all natural as far as my fringe before you went back to England. Now you must needs wear that thing!" and she pointed indignantly to a portion of Kitty's locks which that charming maiden carried in her hand.

"You must wear a keeper in England. How would you keep your hair smart without one?"

Mrs. Rolt held up her hands with a little gesture of horror.

"Spare me that word, Kitty, before breakfast at any rate. Smart! That is your gospel nowadays. Who said that you must be smart. I loathe smart people."

"You prefer—Jims."

"Yes, infinitely. Jim is a man."

"And Mr. Anstruther is not?"

"I did not say so. I don't know. He may be one in embryo, but he'll take a lot of making."

"Would you not rather that Jim had some of your pet aversion's 'making' in the English language for instance. Or is it necessary to talk like a broncho buster to be a man?"

Polly Rolt hesitated. "She did not want to lie. Indeed downright truthfulness was one of her occasionally painful characteristics, but she did not like to admit any blemishes in her favorite."

"Oh, well, fine English is as easy to put on for a man like Jim, as your tongue is for you. A man must speak the language of a country if he wants to be understood in it. You used to understand Jim well enough before you went home."

"And now I don't. He seems to me to have changed. In some way he does not seem to be natural any more."

"I thought your complaint was that he was not sufficiently artificial—smart I mean."

"He isn't that, either. But hurry up. Here they come, and the two ladies whiskered round the corner and into the scullery of their cabin, to put on the last finishing touches."

A minute later they were congratulating Combe and Anstruther upon a fine buck which the two slung in the wagon.

"Who shot it, Jim? You, of course," asked Kitty, her dainty head as trim as if she had just parted from her maid, though Mrs. Rolt's fringe was still a trifle damp and straight.

"No, Mr. Anstruther killed him."

"And that is all I had to do with it," added Anstruther. "Combe found his tracks; I went right away from them, walked all over the country until I was beginning to grow weary. He told me to get my rifle ready at the foot of a hog's back, and as we peeped over, said 'shoot!' That is all I knew of our hunt."

"Jim had him picketed for you," said the girl.

Jim laughed. "Picketted to his tent, Miss Kitty. 'Taint much of a trick to know where a buck would be this time in the morning."

"It is a trick you will owe your steak to, more than to my rifle," retorted Anstruther generously, and then between them they set about preparations for breakfast.

Before that meal was over, the Indian, Pretty Dick, came up with the horse.

"Pretty man track in the swamp," he said.

"Fairclough's boys been hunting, I expect," said Jim, "but it's a long way for them to come for deer meat; I saw their tracks. Didn't you notice them going up that first rise to our right, Anstruther?"

"No, I saw nothing. I was looking for a deer."

"Not Fairclough crowd, Jim. Milka tum tum Chilcotina," put in Pretty Dick.

(To be Continued.)

"Thank you. I thought that was the one thing I could do."

"On schooled horses. You haven't tried a buck jumper yet."

"Yes he has, though," put in Combe, looking up from the plug he was whitening.

"And you did not give us a chance of seeing the show! That was mean, Jim."

"There wasn't much of a show."

"Well, I'm not sure that you would do much better myself as a cowboy," said the girl boldly. "It all depends what you are used to. I suppose you put him on Job. That brute would throw anyone but a broncho buster."

"Didn't throw Mr. Anstruther anyway."

"What! Did not Job get him off?"

The girl's whole face lit up with pleasure and pride in her friend.

"Wasn't to be done unless that cayuse had shed his hide," said Jim quietly. "Your friend can ride, and if Jim put a little too much stress upon 'your friend' the admission that he could ride was very hearty and generous for a cowboy who was jealous."

The girl knew it, knew, too, that horsemanship was Jim Combe's great gift, and for a moment her eyes dwelt seriously on that big loose figure in shape, that old friend who had taught her so much, and borne with her so long. If only he could speak English, if only he was not "so Canadian," would he not be the better man of the two?

A year ago, before she had been dazzled by the glamor and luxury of the Old Country, she would have been able to answer. Now she hesitated.

"After Combe's testimonial, which I appreciate, do you think I shall ever make a cowboy?" persisted Anstruther.

"Riding is not all. It may make a cowboy. I was thinking rather of a Western man."

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