

Mr. Carteret and Others

**By
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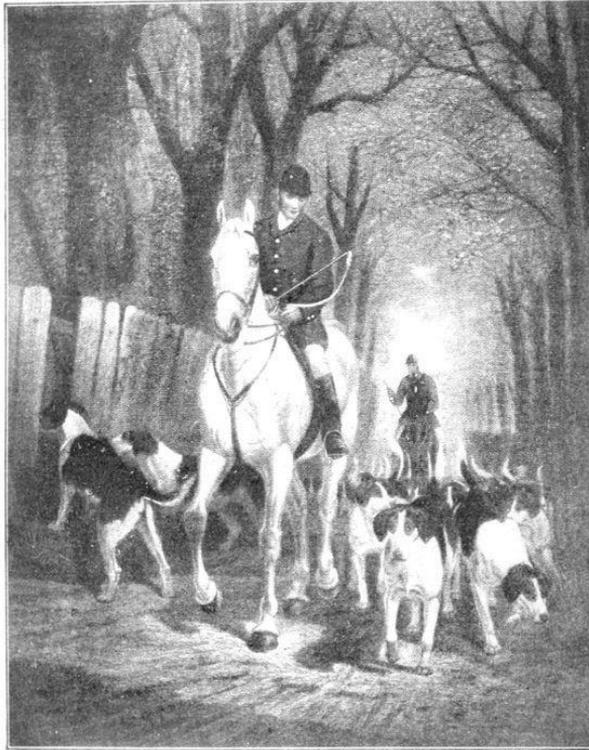
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Mr. Carteret



“It’s one of the smartest packs in England”

I

MR. CARTERET AND HIS FELLOW AMERICANS ABROAD

“It must have been highly interesting,” observed Mrs. Archie Brawle; “so much pleasanter than a concert.”

“Rather!” replied Lord Frederic. “It was ripping!”

Mrs. Ascott-Smith turned to Mr. Carteret. She had been listening to Lord Frederic Westcote, who had just come down from town where he had seen the Wild West show. “Is it so?” she asked. “Have you ever seen them?” By “them” she meant the Indians.

Mr. Carteret nodded.

“It seems so odd,” continued Mrs. Archie Brawle, “that they should ride without saddles. Is it a pose?”

“No, I fancy not,” replied Lord Frederic.

“They must get very tired without stirrups,” insisted Mrs. Archie. “But perhaps they never ride very long at a time.”

“That is possible,” said Lord Frederic doubtfully. “They are only on about twenty minutes in the show.”

Mr. Pringle, the curate, who had happened in to pay his monthly call upon Mrs. Ascott-Smith, took advantage of the pause. “Of course, I am no horseman,” he began apprehensively, “and I have never seen the red Indians, either in their native wilds or in a show,

but I have read not a little about them, and I have gathered that they almost live on horseback.”

Major Hammerslea reached toward the tea table for another muffin and hemmed. “It is a very different thing,” he said with heavy impressiveness. “It is a very different thing.”

The curate looked expectant, as if believing that his remarks were going to be noticed. But nothing was farther from the Major’s mind.

“What is so very different?” inquired Mrs. Ascott-Smith, after a pause had made it clear that the Major had ignored Pringle.

“It is one thing, my dear Madame, to ride a stunted, half-starved pony, as you say, ‘bareback,’ and another thing to ride a conditioned British hunter (he pronounced it huntaw) without a saddle. I must say that the latter is an impossibility.” The oracle came to an end and the material Major began on the muffin.

There was an approving murmur of assent. The Major was the author of “Schooling and Riding British Hunters”; however, it was not only his authority which swayed the company, but individual conviction. Of the dozen people in the room, excepting Pringle, all rode to hounds with more or less enthusiasm, and no one had ever seen any one hunting without a saddle and no one had ever experienced any desire to try the experiment. Obviously it was an absurdity.

“Nevertheless,” observed Lord Frederic, “I must say their riding was very creditable—quite as good as one sees on any polo field in England.”

Major Hammerslea looked at him severely, as if his youth were not wholly an excuse. "It is, as I said," he observed. "It is one thing to ride an American pony and another to ride a British hunter. One requires horsemanship, the other does not. And horsemanship," he continued, "which properly is the guiding of a horse across country, requires years of study and experience."

Lord Frederic looked somewhat unconvinced but he said nothing.

"Of course the dear Major (she called it deah Majaw) is unquestionably right," said Mrs. Ascott-Smith.

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Carteret. "I suppose that he has often seen Indians ride?"

"Have you often seen these Indians ride?" inquired Mrs. Ascott-Smith of the Major.

"Do you mean Indians or the Red Men of North America?" replied the Major. "And do you mean upon ponies in a show or upon British hunters?"

"Which do you mean?" asked Mrs. Ascott-Smith.

"I suppose that I mean American Indians," said Mr. Carteret, "and either upon ponies or upon British hunters."

"No," said the Major, "I have not. Have you?"

"Not upon British hunters," said Mr. Carteret.

"But do you think that they could?" inquired Lord Frederic.

“It would be foolish of me to express an opinion,” replied Mr. Carteret, “because, in the first place, I have never seen them ride British hunters over fences—”

“They would come off at the first obstacle,” observed the Major, more in sorrow than in anger.

“And in the second place,” continued Mr. Carteret, “I am perhaps naturally prejudiced in behalf of my fellow countrymen.”

Mrs. Ascott-Smith looked at him anxiously. His sister had married a British peer. “But you Americans are quite distinct from the red Indians,” she said. “We quite understand that nowadays. To be sure, my dear Aunt—” She stopped.

“Rather!” said Mrs. Archie Brawle. “You don’t even intermarry with them, do you?”

“That is a matter of personal taste,” said Mr. Carteret. “There is no law against it.”

“But nobody that one knows—” began Mrs. Ascott-Smith.

“There was John Rolfe,” said Mr. Carteret; “he was a very well known chap.”

“Do you know him?” asked Mrs. Brawle.

The curate sniggered. His hour of triumph had come. “Rolfe is dead,” he said.

“Really!” said Mrs. Brawle, coldly. “It had quite slipped my mind. You see I never read the papers during the hunting. But is his wife received?”

“I believe that she was,” said Mr. Carteret.

The curate was still sniggering and Mrs. Brawle put her glass in her eye and looked at him. Then she turned to Mr. Carteret. “But all this,” she said, “of course, has nothing to do with the question. Do you think that these red Indians could ride bareback across our country?”

“As I said before,” replied Mr. Carteret, “it would be silly of me to express an opinion, but I should be interested in seeing them try it.”

“I have a topping idea!” cried Lord Frederic. He was an enthusiastic, simple-minded fellow.

“You must tell us,” exclaimed Mrs. Ascott-Smith.

“Let us have them down, and take them hunting!”

“How exciting!” exclaimed Mrs. Ascott-Smith. “What sport!”

The Major looked at her reprovingly. “It would be as I said,” he observed.

“But it would be rather interesting,” said Mrs. Brawle.

“It might,” said the Major, “it might be interesting.”

“It would be ripping!” said Lord Frederic. “But how can we manage it?”

“I’ll mount them,” said the Major with a grim smile. “My word! They shall have the pick of my stable though I have to spend a month rebreaking horses that have run away.”

“But it isn’t the difficulty of mounting them,” said Lord Frederic. “You see I’ve never met any of these chaps.” He turned to Mr. Carteret with a sudden inspiration. “Are any of them friends of yours?” he asked.

Mrs. Ascott-Smith looked anxiously at Mr. Carteret, as if she feared that it would develop that some of the people in the show were his cousins.

“No,” he replied, “I don’t think so, although I may have met some of them in crossing the reservations. But I once went shooting with Grady, one of the managers of the show.”

“Better yet!” said Lord Frederic. “Do you think that he would come and bring some of them down?” he asked.

“I think he would,” said Mr. Carteret. He knew that the showman was strong in Grady—as well as the sportsman.

The Major rose to go to the billiard room. “I have one piece of advice to give you,” he said. “This prank is harmless enough, but establish a definite understanding with this fellow that you are not to be liable in damages for personal injuries which his Indians may receive. Explain to him that it is not child’s play and have him put it in writing.”

“You mean to have him execute a kind of release?” said Mr. Carteret.

“Precisely that,” said the Major. “I was once sued for twenty pounds by a groom that fell off my best horse and let him run away, and damme, the fellow recovered.” He bowed to the ladies and left the room.

“Of course we can fix all that up,” said Lord Frederic. “The old chap is a bit overcautious nowadays, but how can we get hold of this fellow Grady?”

“I’ll wire him at once, if you wish,” said Mr. Carteret, and he went to the writing table. “When do you want him to come down?” he asked, as he began to write.

“We might take them out with the Quorn on Saturday,” said Lord Frederic, “but the meet is rather far for us. Perhaps it would be better to have them on Thursday with Charley Ploversdale’s hounds.”

Mr. Carteret hesitated a moment. “Wouldn’t Ploversdale be apt to be fussy about experiments? He’s rather conservative, you know, about the way people are turned out. I saw him send a man home one day who was out without a hat. It was an American who was afraid that hats made his hair come out.”

“Pish,” said Lord Frederic, “Charley Ploversdale is mild as a dove.”

“Suit yourself,” said Mr. Carteret. “I’ll make it Thursday. One more question,” he added. “How many shall I ask him to bring down?” At this moment the Major came into the room again. He had mislaid his eyeglasses.

“I should think that a dozen would be about the right number,” said Lord Frederic, replying to Mr. Carteret. “It would be very imposing.”

“Too many!” said the Major. “We must mount them on good horses and I don’t want my entire stable ruined by men who have never lepped a fence.”

“I think the Major is right about the matter of numbers,” said Mr. Carteret. “How would three do?”

“Make it three,” said the Major.

Before dinner was over a reply came from Grady saying that he and three bucks would be pleased to arrive Thursday morning prepared for a hunting party.

This took place on Monday, and at various times during Tuesday and Wednesday Mr. Carteret gave the subject thought. By Thursday morning his views had ripened. He ordered his tea and eggs to be served in his room and came down a little past ten dressed in knickerbockers and an old shooting coat. He wandered into the dining-room and found Mrs. Ascott-Smith sitting by the fire entertaining Lord Frederic, as he went to and from the sideboard in search of things to eat.

“Good morning,” said Mr. Carteret, hoarsely.

Lord Frederic looked around and as he noticed Mr. Carteret’s clothes his face showed surprise.

“Hello!” he said, “you had better hurry and change, or you will be late. We have to start in half an hour to meet Grady.”

Mr. Carteret coughed. “I don’t think that I can go out to-day. It is a great disappointment.”

“Not going hunting?” exclaimed Mrs. Ascott-Smith. “What is the matter?”

“I have a bad cold,” said Mr. Carteret miserably.

“But, my dear fellow,” exclaimed Lord Frederic, “it will do your cold a world of good!”

“Not a cold like mine,” said Mr. Carteret.

“But this is the day, don’t you know?” said Lord Frederic. “How am I going to manage things without you?”

“All that you have to do is to meet them at the station and take them to the meet,” said Mr. Carteret. “Everything else has been arranged.”

“But I’m awfully disappointed,” said Lord Frederic. “I had counted on you to help, don’t you see, and introduce them to Ploversdale. It would be more graceful for an American to do it than for me. You understand?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Carteret, “I understand. It’s a great disappointment, but I must bear it philosophically.”

Mrs. Ascott-Smith looked at him sympathetically, and he coughed twice. “You are suffering,” she said. “Freddy, you really must not urge him to expose himself. Have you a pain here?” she inquired, touching herself in the region of the pleura.

“Yes,” said Mr. Carteret, “it is just there, but I daresay that it will soon be better.”

“I am afraid not,” said his hostess. “This is the way pneumonia begins. You must take a medicine that I have. They say that it is quite wonderful for inflammatory colds. I’ll send Hodgson for it,” and she touched the bell.

“Please, please don’t take that trouble,” entreated Mr. Carteret.

“But you must take it,” said Mrs. Ascott-Smith. “They call it Broncholine. You pour it in a tin and inhale it or swallow it, I forget which, but it’s very efficacious. They used it on Teddy’s pony when it was sick. The little creature died, but that was because they gave it too much, or not enough, I forget which.”

Hodgson appeared and Mrs. Ascott-Smith gave directions about the Broncholine.

“I thank you very much,” said Mr. Carteret humbly. “I’ll go to my room and try it at once.”

“That’s a good chap!” said Lord Frederic, “perhaps you will feel so much better that you can join us.”

“Perhaps,” said Mr. Carteret gloomily, “or it may work as it did on the pony.” And he left the room.

After Hodgson had departed from his chamber leaving explicit directions as to how and how not to use the excellent Broncholine, Mr. Carteret poured a quantity of it from the bottle and threw it out of the window, resolving to be on the safe side. Then he looked at his boots and his pink coat and white leathers, which were laid out upon the bed. “I don’t think there can be any danger,” he thought, “if I turn up after they have started. I loathe stopping in all day.” He dressed leisurely, ordered his second horse to be sent on, and some time after the rest of the household had gone to the meet he sallied forth. As he knew the country and the coverts which Lord Ploversdale would draw, he counted on joining the tail of the hunt, thus keeping out of sight. He inquired of a rustic if he had seen hounds pass and receiving “no” for an answer, he jogged on at a faster trot, fearing that the hunt might have gone away in some other direction.

As he came around a bend in the road, he saw four women riding toward him, and as they drew near, he saw that they were Lady Violet Weatherbone and her three daughters. These young ladies were known as the Three Guardsmen, a sobriquet not wholly inappropriate; for, as Lord Frederic described them, they were “big-boned, upstanding fillies,” between twenty-five and thirty and very hard goers across any country, and always together.

“Good morning,” said Mr. Carteret, bowing. “I suppose the hounds are close by?” It was a natural assumption, as Lady Violet on hunting days was never very far from the hounds.

“I do not know,” she responded, and her tone further implied that she did not care.

Mr. Carteret hesitated a moment. “Is anything the matter?” he asked. “Has anything happened?”

“Yes,” said Lady Violet frankly, “something has happened.” Here the daughters modestly turned their horses away.

“Some one,” continued Lady Violet, “brought savages to the meet.” She paused impressively.

“Not really!” said Mr. Carteret. It was all that he could think of to say.

“Yes,” said Lady Violet, “and while it would have mattered little to me, it was impossible—” She motioned with her head toward the three maidens, and paused.

“Forgive me,” said Mr. Carteret, “but do I quite understand?”

“At the first I thought,” said Lady Violet, “that they were attired in painted fleshings, but upon using my glass, it was clear that I was

mistaken. Otherwise, I should have brought them away at the first moment.”

“I see,” said Mr. Carteret. “It is most unfortunate!”

“It is, indeed!” said Lady Violet; “but the matter will not be allowed to drop. They were brought to the meet by that young profligate, Lord Frederic Westcote.”

“You amaze me,” said Mr. Carteret. He bowed, started his horse, and jogged along for five minutes, then he turned to the right upon a crossroad and suddenly found himself with hounds. They were feathering excitedly about the mouth of a tile drain into which the fox had evidently gone. No master, huntsmen or whips were in sight, but sitting wet and mud-daubed upon horses dripping with muddy water were Grady dressed in cowboy costume and three naked Indians. Mr. Carteret glanced about over the country and understood. They had swum the brook at the place where it ran between steep clay banks and the rest of the field had gone around to the bridge. As he looked toward the south, he saw Lord Ploversdale riding furiously toward him followed by Smith, the huntsman. Grady had not recognized Mr. Carteret turned out in pink as he was, and for the moment the latter decided to remain incognito.

Before Lord Ploversdale, Master of Fox-hounds, reached the road, he began waving his whip. He appeared excited. “What do you mean by riding upon my hounds?” he shouted. He said this in several ways with various accompanying phrases, but neither the Indians nor Grady seemed to notice him. It occurred to Mr. Carteret that, although Lord Ploversdale’s power of expression was wonderful for England, it nevertheless fell short of Arizona

standards. Then, however, he noticed that Grady was absorbed in adjusting a kodak camera, with which he was evidently about to take a picture of the Indians alone with the hounds. He drew back in order both to avoid being in the field of the picture and to avoid too close proximity with Lord Ploversdale as he came over the fence into the road.

“What do you mean, sir!” shouted the enraged Master of Foxhounds, as he pulled up his horse.

“A little more in the middle,” replied Grady, still absorbed in taking the picture.



“A little more in the middle”

Lord Ploversdale hesitated. He was speechless with surprise for the moment.

Grady pressed the button and began putting up the machine.

“What do you mean by riding on my hounds, you and these persons?” demanded Lord Ploversdale.

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