

CHAPTER I.



H, leetle Bateese wat
for,
Oh, leetle Bateese wat
for,
Oh, leetle Bateese
Wat for you grease
Mine leetle dog's tail
wit tar."

These words, sung to a monotonous and unbeautiful tune, smote the ears of the occupants of a train as it suddenly came to a standstill before a lonely wooden structure in the province of Quebec. As the engine blew off steam the invisible singer roared anew, as if in opposition—

"Oh, leetle Bateese wat for,
Oh, leetle Bateese—"

A second's pause, then the figure of a man emerged from the building, followed by two little boys in ill-fitting clothes, each carrying a miniature telescope valise and having a cardboard tag attached to his neck by stout twine. One child was sallow and melancholy, the other rosy, plump and beamingly cheerful. The aspect of the sallow one took on an added shade of gloom when he was enjoined, in pantomime, not to move from the doorway while his companions made their way down the platform accompanied by a particularly ferocious-looking bull dog. After some parley before the baggage car the canine was disposed of and man and boy retraced their steps to a first-class coach. Here an animated discussion took place with the conductor, a ticket exchanged hands, the small boy's tag was read, he was lifted to the platform, "all aboard" was shouted, and the train moved out.

The conductor was good-natured and, seeing his charge struggling with tears, took him by the hand, saying, "Come along with me, sonny."

And thus it was the plump little boy found "Pat and Patty." They were so called by relatives and friends during their engagement, and now that they had been married ten whole days, Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Patterson wondered they had ever been known otherwise. Patty was wont to say she was "just Pat and a little more." Pat and Patty were seated in the parlor car, ostensibly reading, but behind Patty's novel an affair of the toilet was being carried on; she was furtively rubbing the "shine" off her dainty nose with "papier poudre," while Pat, watching her unbeknownst, wondered if any other woman could have looked as fascinating under like circumstances. These innocent occupations were interrupted by the advent of the conductor and his companion. Patty, laying down "papier" and novel, smiled at the small boy, who brightened visibly.

"Poor little chap! Is he all alone?" she asked, and the conductor became confidential at once.

"He's a little Frenchy," he said, leaning over the end of the seat. "Been in some kind of a home for a year, poor kid, his ma's dead, an' his pa's working in Noo York. He's doin' pretty well now, so he sent for the youngster. The sisters up at the Home give him an' another kid in charge of the hired man back there an' told him to write out these here tags an' send 'em along. Let's see your calling card, sonny—Got his Noo York address on it—huh! Jim's forgot to put on his name—jest like him—but it's Bateese—Bateese—Good Lord, if I ain't forgot! What's your name, sonny?"

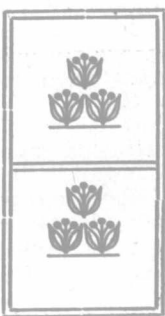
"Bateese," was the prompt reply. "Bateese what?—go on—"

Bateese shook his head, smiled broadly and edged nearer Patty. "Don't understand much English," said the conductor, "but anyhow the address is O. K. an' his dad 'll meet him. He's got a bull dog on board, too, bandy-legged, wall-eyed, with a hare-lip. Don't know how they come to let him have him at the Home. What's the name of your dog, son?"

Bateese looked puzzled. "Dog, chien boule dog—you know." The dark face lighted up. "Chien boule dog," he repeated and laughed till his little fat sides shook.

"You are a dear," said Patty, "come and sit by me."

He knew the tone and gesture, and,

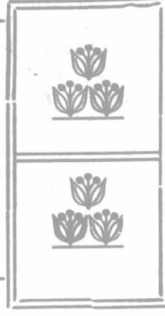


TAG

OR THE
CHIEN BOULE DOG

BY VALANCE PATRIARCHE

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with the fickleness of youth, turned his back upon his erstwhile friend and snuggled up to the smiling lady who had won his heart. According to him his name was simply Bateese. Only that and nothing more, while the occupant of the baggage car was called "Cairlo." As his shyness wore off he remembered his scanty English and a wild three-cornered conversation ensued. Pat would ponderously give vent to a sentence in French as she spoke in the schools, to be met by a disconcerting stare from Bateese, upon which Patty would translate in a mixture of French in one lesson and habitant English gleaned during a summer holiday in a Quebec village. This was usually the more intelligible of the two, and Bateese would reply in a cheerful jargon of his own—thus, from Pat: "Parley vous Francaise ou Anglaise d'en l' institution ou avez vous le—le silence?"

A wide stare from Bateese. "He has le—le silence," mocked Patty, then, coaxingly, "Bateese, you spik Angleesh some tam or you parley vous Francais toujours?"

"Spik Angleesh," answered Bateese, proudly, "an' w'en garcon 'e say I not spik Angleesh I ponch hees eye."

"By George, he's a jolly little cuss," said Pat, "if he only understood my French better."

"You go to mak' too moche on de Parisian," quoted Patty, and they laughed. They continued to laugh at short intervals like three gay irresponsible children until the other occupants of the car looked amused out of sheer sympathy.

It was a regular love feast until they arrived at a refreshment station, when it became a banquet of a more substantial order. Bateese was hungry. The trio alighted, and being told the train would remain forty-five minutes owing to an obstruction on the line, and having seen Bateese fed to repletion at the lunch counter, they started down the platform. The door of the baggage car was open and Cairlo stood revealed in all his hideousness.

"Pretty thing for a lap dog," commented Pat, while Bateese jumped in frantic efforts to reach his pet. Standing with bandy legs well apart and huge head straining at his chain, Cairlo was a forbidding object, but the heart of Bateese yearned for him. In vain he was reasoned with, coaxed. He began to cry, gently at first, then, seeing the consternation on Patty's face, his wail became a fearful howl. The baggage man appeared and took in the situation.

"Wants his purp, eh? Here, put him up an' I'll sit him on this trunk—There you are, kiddie!" Bateese became smiling and amiable at once. "The brute ain't half as savage as you'd think. Not much mor'n a pup, and kind of affectionate disposition."

It would seem so, for as Pat and Patty resumed their walk Bateese and his pet were leaning shoulder to shoulder, the small boy's arm about Cairlo's neck. There were further delays in starting, and it was an hour later when the bridal couple went to look at their protegee. He was asleep in the attitude they had last seen him, and the bulldog wore a silly, apologetic expression as he wagged his tail at their approach. Bateese awoke. Having dug his knuckles in his eyes and yawned, he murmured:

"I'm not feel ver' bon en bas," laying his fat hands tragically on his leather belt.

"It's the cream puffs. I told you not to give him three, Pat, and he has cream all over his neck, too. Come here, Bateese, until I wipe you off."

Bateese moved heavily; the sin of gluttony had brought worse pangs than

those of remorse in its wake. A porter, coming up at the moment, remarked briskly, "Leaving at once, sah!" and seeing the child, lifted him down and ran him along the platform at a good pace with Pat and Patty following.

They were safely aboard, the train was moving, and Patty was soothing the outraged infant, whose soul had cried for peace and been so rudely disturbed, when Pat, leaning over, looked first puzzled, then anxious.

"Bateese, where is your tag?" lifting the empty string about the child's neck, "tag, votre tiquette ou est il?"

Bateese answered in a tone laden with sleep: "Cairlo, 'e lak de creme on dat tiquette—mebbe Cairlo 'e—" He yawned audibly and his black head thudded onto the lap of Patty. He was at rest. "That thing had his address on it," said Pat, a little uneasily. "Guess I'll go and hunt up our friend the conductor."

Returning some time later, he said with solemn emphasis:

"Patty, that conductor has gone back on another train and the present one never even heard of a Bateese. The baggageman knows nothing, the porter less, and I'm blamed if I remember even the name of the street—Do you? Think hard."

His wife shook her head slowly. "But, Pat, do you mean to say—"

"That we have a small, fat, French unknown on our hands for Heaven knows how long, and we on our way to spend a giddy honeymoon in gay New York. That's what I mean." His emphasis was bitter.

For a moment Patty looked wild consternation, then the corners of her mouth began to curl up. "To say nothing of the chien boule dog," she added, with a Frenchy lift of eyebrows and shoulders.

"D—, er, hang the boule dog," said her husband, viciously. "All the same he is the only one with inside information on the subject. By George, Patty, you know it—it's—"

They gazed at each other mutely for some seconds, then Pat's eyes twinkled, he threw back his head and haw-hawed till the car resounded with his mirth. His bride joined him and they were almost choking when Bateese raised his head and fretfully exclaimed: "I don't go mak de laf on you w'en you not feel ver' nice en bas!"

"If you only knew it, Bateese," said Pat, "the laugh is on us, and we are doing it for you, and you ought to be mighty grateful."

But Bateese was asleep.

CHAPTER II.

The next morning found the waif looking as joyously rotund as ever and not one whit elated by the fact that he had slept in a drawing room section. His protectors were fresh and smiling also, having decided that all they required to do upon their arrival at the station was to march slowly round the waiting room with Bateese well in evidence until an eager French father should dash forward and snatch his child to his bosom. They would then stand by with smiles of benevolence and, waving aside the parent's fervid blessing, would kiss dear little Bateese, shake his father's honest hand, and gracefully withdraw. It was the imagination of this drama which kept Mr. Patterson serene in spite of the enormous breakfast eaten by Bateese, "a la carte," this and the sight of his bride daintily arrayed for the conquest of the metropolis and with the light of anticipation in her eyes. Red-brown eyes they were, almost the color of the wavy hair above, and her skin was very

smooth and very white in contrast to the vivid red of her lips with their corners curling up for laughter on the slightest provocation—like the petals of a flower, cup-shaped to receive the sun. Of a verity she was good to look upon.

Having alighted in the humming New York station, the bride and groom proceeded to carry out their plan. Bateese, frightened and dazed by the noise and jostling of the crowd, was glad to be placed between them, clinging to a hand of each, and thus they walked with methodical slowness over every foot of the huge waiting room; Pat and Patty stiffening their arms to thrust the small boy well forward, as if mutely offering him to the public. He was instructed to call out upon sight of his father, while they keenly scanned the throng for a lone man with an expression of yearning parenthood. Trains came and went, the crowds surged in and out, families were disunited or made complete according to the time table, and still Bateese remained fatherless. Officials were interviewed; no one had seen a Frenchman who looked as if he had lost his one ewe lamb, no inquiries had been made. They had marched through the station so often they were all weary when an awful suspicion dawned upon the bridegroom; they were, perhaps, the victims of a well-designed plot and no father would ever claim Bateese. As time wore on the suspicion became a horrible certainty in his mind, but he forbore to mention it. After two fruitless hours they seated themselves to discuss the situation. Patty had an idea. She would take their protegee to the matron in charge of the ladies' waiting room, leave money with her for his lunch, and request that he be handed over to his father when that person appeared to claim him. They were surprised they had not thought of such a simple arrangement long ago. A few moments later Patty was interviewing a prim-faced matron. The little boy's father had failed to meet him, she stated, but would arrive later, and if the matron would kindly take him in charge until that time and see that he was provided with food if necessary (here a frivolous little metal purse came into play) Patty would be most grateful. The radiant smile which terminated this speech failed to produce any softening expression in response; the listener merely asked for the name of the little boy and some description of the father, whereby he might be identified.

"Well, we don't know his name, you see—only Bateese. He was put on the train by some man and we—well, we just happened to get him."

"I suppose he was given in charge of the conductor. Why didn't you leave him with him?" Evidently the woman was not favorably impressed.

"The conductor left the train, you see, and the other men knew nothing about him."

"Oh!" said the matron, and looked intently into space.

"He was sent from a Home of some kind, poor baby," added Patty, in pathetic accents.

"Oh, then," brightening, "of course he has a tag with his address somewhere about him. Those institutions always use something of that kind." She fastened an X-ray eye on Bateese, as if to penetrate the innermost recesses of his plump person and discover this appendage.

"Why, of course, he had a tag on," began Patty, promptly, "but," here her unruly lips curled up and a twinkle danced in her eye—"his dog—a chien boule dog he is—chewed it up, and so—"

The woman's icy tones broke in:

"I would advise you to see the police about it, madam. I don't care to be mixed up in anything of the kind." Whereupon she drew herself up and walked resolutely away, leaving the astonished and indignant Patty to grasp Bateese's hand and drag him back to where Pat was soothing his spirit with a good cigar and the reflection that in about one hour he and his bride would be enjoying a cosy tete-a-tete luncheon in one of the city's palatial hotels. His jaw fell when he saw his wife racing excitedly towards him with the small boy trotting in her wake.

(To be Continued)