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“Careless”

By Billee Glynn

WLD BILL was in the habit of shaking his grizzled head over it.

“He was pek-u-lar,” he would say, “pek-u-lar! The hul darn thing was pek-u-lar, in fact, till it looked like nuthin’ more’n as if a page or two o’ that magazine the tender-foot left behind with her picture in it, ’ad somehow slipped covers an’ got torn up on the trail till a feller couldn’t help ridin’ on romance nohow. A long trail it was, too,—all the w’y to the capital from the foothill country; but it ran like a placer stream from be-ginnin’ to end, bright with more’n one woman’s eyes and the purtiest of the hul sex at the end of it.

“None of us believed him, of course, when he come back and spun the yarn—though he did do it so out of the ordinary, gentle and reserved like. The best lie he ever told, we said, and he had let loose some. Always runnin’ to imageration and head, that feller, like a buckin’ broncho. But you couldn’t help likin’ him for wot he was any more’n you

could guess wot that was goin’ to be or had been. He never told us that. Just blew into camp one mornin’ a little poorer and gayer’n we’d ever seen any-one afore, an’ we called ’im ‘Careless’ on the head of it, an’ set up a drink that he didn’t take. Wasn’t very sociable in that line—didn’t need to be, I raickon, for he was a little drunk more or less alwus. Anyhow, when it come to a scrap he was his weight in wildcats, an’ the beast that could buck ’im or he didn’t look a picture on has yet to be bred in the foothill country. Then he was such a bloomin’ kid in it all—an unroped, reckless sort of young ’un with his smile an’ his kurly hair that the average woman simply went daft over ’im. At least the only average one we knew at the McTavish did, till he ’ad to fight for her, and as for the other— Well, as I’ve said afore, not a soul of us hitched up to it till the newspaper come with the hul blame story headed in big black letters which made us sit up some an’ take notice.’

That was Old Bill’s version of it and