

## TWENTY-TWO

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

This late story (1938) echoes earlier satires poking fun at British hunters for their love of fancy equipment and gadgets, baths, shaving, and other civilian ablutions foreign to the proper mountain man in his mountain camp. The “pilgrim” disgraces himself both by his elaborate morning *toilette* and by making a noise that causes a prize moose to bolt. However, he redeems himself somewhat by shooting the moose later the same day, when it unaccountably shows up where the hunter and Tex are fishing. The sly introduction of a gentlemanly code of sportsmanship upends the dominant ethos of the piece—animal-savvy guides, stupid pilgrim—when the hunter shouts to spook the moose into running...

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## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

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By N. Vernon-Wood

“FAR BE IT FROM ME,” says Sawback Smith, “to cast any aspersions on your nationality, feller, but you gotta admit that huntin’ with some of these here County families is what curdles the milk of human kindness, an’ frays to hell the cinch that binds the Empire.”

I’m taking the scalp off a ram, an’ had got to the eyes, where you’ve got to use a certain amount of discretion an’ a light hand, or you’ll nicks the lids, so I just say Uh Uh, an’ keep on skinnin’.

The Hon. Fitzwilliam Smyth-Smyth has plastered this Canadensis yesterday, an’ seein’ that his trophies has got to be shipped to some taxidermist in London who mounts ’em for His Majesty an’ the Nobility, I’m tryin’ to do a clean workmanlike job. There ain’t gonna be no comeback about hair slippin’ or sloppy fleshin’, not if I can help it.

When I’d got past the eyes, an’ was whittlin’ down the nose cartilage, I ask Sawback what has stirred up the mud in the placid spring of his disposition this time.

“My old man come out here from Massachusetts before the Riel Rebellion, an’ they’s been Smiths in New England fur just as long as they’ve been in Slocum-in-the-Moors, Brummagemshire,” says my side kick. “An’ if that monocle-manipulatin’ Gump-chinned woodbiner calls me a ghillie one more time, I’m a-goin’ to re-enact Concord, Bunker Hill, an’ Yorktown all over again on his desiccated frame.”

“Shucks,” I says, “it’s a national habit. Ever since Bill Shakespeare asks,

What's in a name? the Cousin Jacks think they've got to be some casual. This one keeps a-callin' me McWhirter, an' you know that the only Scotch in me is taken from them dimpled crocks, as a antidote for incipient senile decay, an' to facilitate my justly famed rendition of Frankie and Johnny.

"I used to check him up at first, but he explains that the last hunt he made was in Muckle wee Stoor, an' his ghilly's name was McWhirter. Followin' that line of reason', by the time he's got around to huntin' Kudu he'll call some Swahili sourdough 'Tex,' an' what of it?"

"The last hunt I made," replies Sawback, "was with an Injun called Shaba Snooga, which is a name that embarrassed even Snooga hisself, an' it's a poor scheme that don't work two ways. From now on, I'm goin' to call the Hon. Fitzwillie, Snooga. Pity he don't savvy Stoney lingo, but just callin' him it will ease my feelin's some."

Which won't lead to no International complications, an' might help Sawback recover his armor proper, as they say in Boston.

Just the same, it does take a certain kind of Limey to get us bleedin' Colonials all puffy in the withers. This one has come out to accumulate a mess of trophies for his ancestral dugout, an' he's outfitted to the last details by Gamage of High Holborn. What with this an' that, our camp looks like a section of the Sportsman's Show, with Abercrombie trimmin's. First night in camp, Sawback got all embroiled with Fitz's special an' private tent. It's the Arctic-Safari model by the British Tent, Awning, Sail and Lorry Tarpaulin Mfg. Co. Ltd., an' as simple as the Fourth Dimension.

"Have you got the blue prints for pitchin' this jeesley shootin' box?" inquired Sawback, after the fifth attempt.

"Perfectly simple, my dear Bucksaw," replied Fitz. "You take this lanyard, pars it from the heah to theah, an' theah you are."

"An' then whereinhell are ya?" Smitty wants to know, just as the whole issue folds around his neck for the sixth time.

But it's Fitz' habit of miscallin' names, places, an' things that riles my buddy, who's one of these literal blokes, an' can't understand that the British mind works slowly its wonders to perform.

Anyway, I'd got that ram's scalp peeled, an' was rubbin' salt in the ears when the Pilgrim ambles over. "Jolly neat job of fleshing, what?" he gargles. "An' may I arsk what is on the agenda for tomorrow, McWhirter?"

"I ain't McWhirter," I tell him, 'but tomorrow I figger we'd best get an early start an' sneak up on a lick that's right popular with Moose. It's about three miles from camp, an' we can use saddle ponies most of the way. If

we're skunked in the mornin' we can do a little fishin' an' try it agen just before dark."

"Right ho. I shall prepare the fishing tackle immediately, an' eliminate any unnecessary delay in the morning," says he, and he ducks for his perigrinatin' palace to sort out the correct impedimentia for a combined Moose stalk an' fishin' trip.

Sawback an' me roll out next A.M. long before sun shows up, an' while I rustle coffee an' hog's vest, he lights out to jingle the odd saddle pony. Just as the snow caps on the surroundin' peaks are turnin' pink, I heave a chunk of wood at the Honorable's balloon silk boodwar, an' yell "Come an' get your bloody wolf bait!"

It takes his lordship quite some time to wash, shave, manicure, an' tonic the hair, him havin' dispensed with the ministrations of his valet: said gent's gent havin' been left in Banff so Fitz can live the life of the raw, pioneer days, an' so on, what? He marches over to the fly under which I have spread the tools an' dishes, just as the tinkle of hoss bells tell me that Sawback is nearin' camp with the caballos.

"Greetin's an' salutations, McWhir—my man. But, tell me, why wolf bait? I thought we proposed to pursue the Moose today. Does one bait for wolves, really?"

"Merely a figger of our idiomatic speech," I tell him. "It's my uncouth way of announcin' that brekker is served in the mornin' room. You tie into the mush while I help Sawback catch a couple of plugs for ridin' purposes. This done, we join Fitz at the table, where he's deliberatin' between marmalade on mush, or bacon on marmalade, an' undoubtedly missin' his deviled kidneys an' kippers.

"Didja see anything while you was jinglin'?" I ask Sawback, meaning naturally did he see any fresh game, or fresh tracks.

"Yeah, I seen a Giant Panda half way up a spruce, an' they's been a couple of Okapis wallowin' in a mud hole up the trail a ways," he sez.

"Oh, come now, Sawhorse," says Fitz, "you're spoofin', what?"

"My mistake," renigs Smitty, "I mean a porcupine, an' a couple of moose calves. It's that book I was readin' last winter. It gets me sorta millin' around in my speech."

The Pilgrim is about as speedy as the Athabaska glacier when it comes to getting' ready to start to commence to begin, but eventually he has loaded up, with rifle, binoculars, telescope, camera, fishin' tackle, spare cigarette holder, an' foldin' tin cup, so finally we're off.

A QUARTER MILE OR SO from the lick we tie up an' proceed afoot. We've got the wind, an' if they's a Moose on the lick we should get a shot, always providin' they don't hear Fitz whose numerous dinguses hung around an' about him, making him apt to rattle or jingle just at the wrong time.

An' that's just what happens. I'm trying to imitate a footsore Injun walkin' on eggs, an' could just see the withers an' antler tips of a bull through the timber, when Fitz hooked his camera strap in a dry spruce limb. It come loose with a crack like a .45-90, an' the Honorable Smyth-Smyth says "Oh blarst!" The bull says nothin', but makes a standin' jump of mebbe forty feet an' lights runnin'. For a couple of seconds we can hear him crashin' through the jack pine, an' the silence comes in large hunks.

"Beastly provokin'," says Fitz; "beastly. An' what do you suggest now?"

They're several things I'd *like* to suggest, but for the sake of universal peace, hands across the sea, an' all, I restrain myself.

"Let's go fishin'," is all I trust myself with, so we poke down to the creek in comparative silence.

Fitz shure can cast a nasty fly, an' for the next hour or so I sorta forget his failin's an' admire his teckneek with a tapered line an' his Bivisible. He's about forty yards downstream from where I settin' with his rifle and cetras, when I hear a sort of clinkin' noise, minglin' with the chatter of the crick. Lookin' upstream, I see a Moose crossin' over, with a head on him like you hear about an' seldom see.

I looked back at the Honorable, who is plumb intent on his castin' an' oblivious to me or the Moose. I don't do a thing to attract his attention, an' I wonder how soon that bull will get the flash of the Pilgrim's rod an' spook out of the country. Well, there's no use settin' like a bump on a log, so I grab the smoke pole an' start backin' downstream. Accordin' to the best authorities, that fool bull should've quit the vicinage forty different times before I got to where the Honorable is tyin' on a fresh cast. I'spect he thought I was gone loco at first, but he finally reads my signs, an' cool as the square-tail he's just landed, hands me his rod, an' reached for his fowlin' piece. He stands watchin' the bull, who's still fiddlin' about in the crick. Sometimes he's belly deep, an' again he's standin' up to his knees contemplatin' this an' that. I'm wonderin' why'n heck he don't shoot, when Fitz gives a shout. An' that's tore it all to hell, I think, as the bull makes a flyin' leap for the bank, but the rifle cracks once, an' old schnozzle puss folds up on the bank deader than fourteen Egyptian mummies.

Settin' by the campfire that evenin' full of liver an' onions, I'm tellin'

Sawback how Fitz busts the Moose. The Honorable is smokin' his Dunhill and cleanin' his rifle. "But what in hell did you holler at him for?" Sawback asks, some perplexed.

"Carn't shoot the bally things settin', you know. Besides, 'twould've been a jolly old chore if I'd dropped him in the watah, what?"

"Speakin' real personal," says Smitty, "I think you're just plastered all over with horseshoes."

"Really?" answers Fitz. "A combination of fortuitous circumstances, I should say, my dear Hacksaw."

Sawback spans the palms of our trophy for the umpteenth time. "Oh hell," he sighs, "you win. Call it any blasted thing you like."

Which he'd proberly do anyway, thinks I to myself.

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