

THE REAL BUFFALO BILL—SHOWMAN

INTERESTING STORIES ABOUT FAMOUS SCOUT.

Man of Character.

Killed His First Indian When Eleven Years Old and Was Best Rifle Shot in the Northwest.

William F. Cody, world-famous as "Buffalo Bill," killed his first Indian when he was eleven years old, became pioneer, cowboy, pony-express rider, army scout, peacemaker, and finally, one of the world's greatest showmen. His career was as wildly picturesque as the red-flannel jockey suit he wore on the day of a race that might have been historic had not the Indians been attracted by Bill's em-bazonry and interrupted. There was one thing however, that this modern Hercules was afraid of—a little baby. He did not know how to handle babies and was always afraid of squashing them. At least he did not know how to handle the first that came to bless his little gray home in the west. Perhaps when the last one came he had learned something by experience, and was as proficient in ambulating with a child as he was in plugging a hole in a coin in the air. Cody had the weakness common to hero and un-anointed alike. When he met Miss Louisa Frederici in Frenchtown, St. Louis, he promptly fell in love, and she, in her "Memories of Buffalo Bill" (D. Appleton & Co.), confesses that she had warning symptoms of that cardiac affection which comes to all women soon or late. A strange incident was connected with the first meeting of these two, for she slapped him full in the mouth before anyone had even so much as said "permit me to present," etc. But the fault was with her cousin, William McDonald, a rollicking young fellow who was as fond of a practical joke as of a woman's smile. She was cuddled, half asleep, in her chair, awaiting the new beau who was to be presented to her when the cousin and Buffalo Bill entered. McDonald took advantage of his cousinly connection, and pulled the chair from under Miss Frederici. She swung wide with her right, and landed—on Buffalo Bill's mouth. Later doubtless the unintentional cruelty was cured by the best of treatments. Of course, the convent-bred girl—she had but recently left convent walls when she met Mr. Cody—played a proper game of coy hesitation until she knew that this tall, straight, and strong young man, with jet black hair, finely molded features, and clear, steady eyes, was such a one as any young woman would give her heart for. She never had occasion to reverse that judgment. Bill Cody was a true lover, a fond and considerate husband, and a gentleman. And Mrs. Cody proved herself a fitting mate for this son of nature. It took a brave woman to leave the comfort and surety of a warm fireside to go out into the uncertainty of the plains, to live where there was constant danger from the Indians, to make a home where men were rough and rude, quicker with a revolver than with a kind word, and where often the members of her own sex who had strayed into the wilderness were beyond the pale. But Mrs. Cody did it. She learned to ride and shoot with almost her husband's skill, and by her woman's wizardry she fashioned—and kept—a home. Here is a glimpse of Bill coming home to find the first addition to his family. He was far away on the plains when the message was sent him by telegraph as far as the wires would carry it, by pony the rest of the way: Days passed. Then came the sound of hurrying feet, the booming of a big voice, and I was in my husband's arms. His eyes were glistening.

"Boy or girl?" he bellowed with that big voice of his.

"A girl, Will," I answered.

"What are we going to name it?" He had taken the covering from the baby's face and was jabbing a tremendous finger toward her eyes, causing me to believe every moment that he would make a slip and ruin her features forever.

"What'll we name her?"

"Why, haven't you thought of a name?" I asked.

"Me?" he started wide-eyed.

"Gosh, I'm lost there. The only thing I ever named was a horse, and none of those names'd do, would they?"

"Hardly. I've thought of the name of Arta."

"Pretty name. 'Lo, Arta.'" he roared—when Will became excited his voice was like a fig-horn. Naturally, with this great being bending over her shouting his happiness, the baby began to cry. Will's face became as long as a coffin.

"Kind of looks like she ain't pleas-

ed," came his simple statement, and I couldn't help laughing at the lugubriousness of his expression.

"My-goodness, neither would you like it if you had some one shouting in your ear. Now, don't poke your finger in her eye! Don't you know how to act around a baby?"

"Never got close enough before to take any lessons," he confessed. "How do you lift her up, anyhow?"

And thus began a new lesson for my scout. He could ride anything made of horse-flesh, he could tear a hole in a dollar flipped into the air and then hit it again with a rifle-bullet before it touched the ground; was at home in the midst of danger, and there never had been an Indian who could best him in a fight, but when it came to babies I was the master.

He was a willing student, but it was a hard lesson. More than once he turned to me in utter discouragement.

"Crickets!" he would say, "but they're sure bundly, aren't they? I'm always afraid of squashing her."

"You ought to be, the way you're carrying her," I'd reply—when I wasn't laughing at his great-hearted, clumsy efforts to amuse the tiny little thing; "if you're so tired why don't you give her to me?"

"Uh-huh. No: I'm all right. We're getting along fine."

Some time later they journeyed farther into the west. Bill, in partnership with another man, had founded a town, another Rome, in Kansas, and he was to be a millionaire. They moved in the prairie-schooners, strung, snake-like, in a long, crooked line across the plain, with outriders properly posted and the wagons grouped so as to afford immediate defense against attack. But only the shack which sheltered the saloon remained of the town when they arrived on the scene. The rest of it had followed the railroad. Her husband summoned to a near-by fort, Mrs. Cody had to spend the night in a frontier saloon alone with her baby. Below were bull-whackers and gamblers, unaware of the presence of a woman and a baby in the house. A shot sounded, and in her mind's eyes she saw the revolver-smoke, blood, and a crumpled figure outside her door. Absolute stillness ensued. But the baby screamed, and presently there came a knock. In her words:

"I did not answer. Again it came—and again. I struggled to reply, but, for a moment, the words simply would not come. At last I managed to get out:

"Who's there?"

"It's only us," some one called, in a voice that was trying terribly hard to be pleasant; "we didn't know anybody was in there. Where's Cody?"

"He's gone to the fort," I said it before I thought.

"But the answer reassured me.

"We're plumb sorry we made the baby cry. One of us got to scuffling around and his shootin'-iron went off. Ain't nobody hurt. We're awful sorry we disturbed you."

"The news that the killing I had imagined had not happened after all brightened my life considerably. And I knew from the tone outside the door that the barroom tough and rough meant that he was standing in humble penitence.

"That's all right," I answered. "The baby's stopped crying now."

There was another moment of apparent consultation. Then the knock came again.

"Mrs. Cody!"

"Yes."

"You dressed?"

"Yes."

"Do you reckon you could stand it to let us in. We'd powerful like to see that baby of Bill's."

"Somewhat fearfully I rose and pawed about at the side of the old kerosene-lamp, at last to find an old 'eight-day' match and light it. Then I opened the door.

"About ten men stood there, dirty, unkempt, bearded, their hats in their hands. They looked at me with a sort of bobbing bow as I faced them; then timorously, and even more fearfully than I had walked, they stepped into the room. One by one they involuntarily lined up, somewhat after the fashion of persons passing a Bier. Then they gathered near the cot where little Arta lay.

"Silently they watched her a moment, their lips grinning behind their heavy, scragged beards. Then in a half-embarrassed way, one of them stuck out a finger. Arta reached for it, caught it, and laughed. The bearded one's face beamed.

"Look at the little—!" he exclaimed, then, suddenly realizing his oaths, pulled away his finger and faded in the protection of the rest of the group. The others looked about them with pained expressions, understanding for once that here was a place where profanity was not fashionable. At last, the bartender, being more of a man of society than the others, wiped his hands on his dirty apron, and, turning to me with a wide grin, asked:

"Pretty baby, ain't it? What is it,

(Continued on page 6, column 1.)

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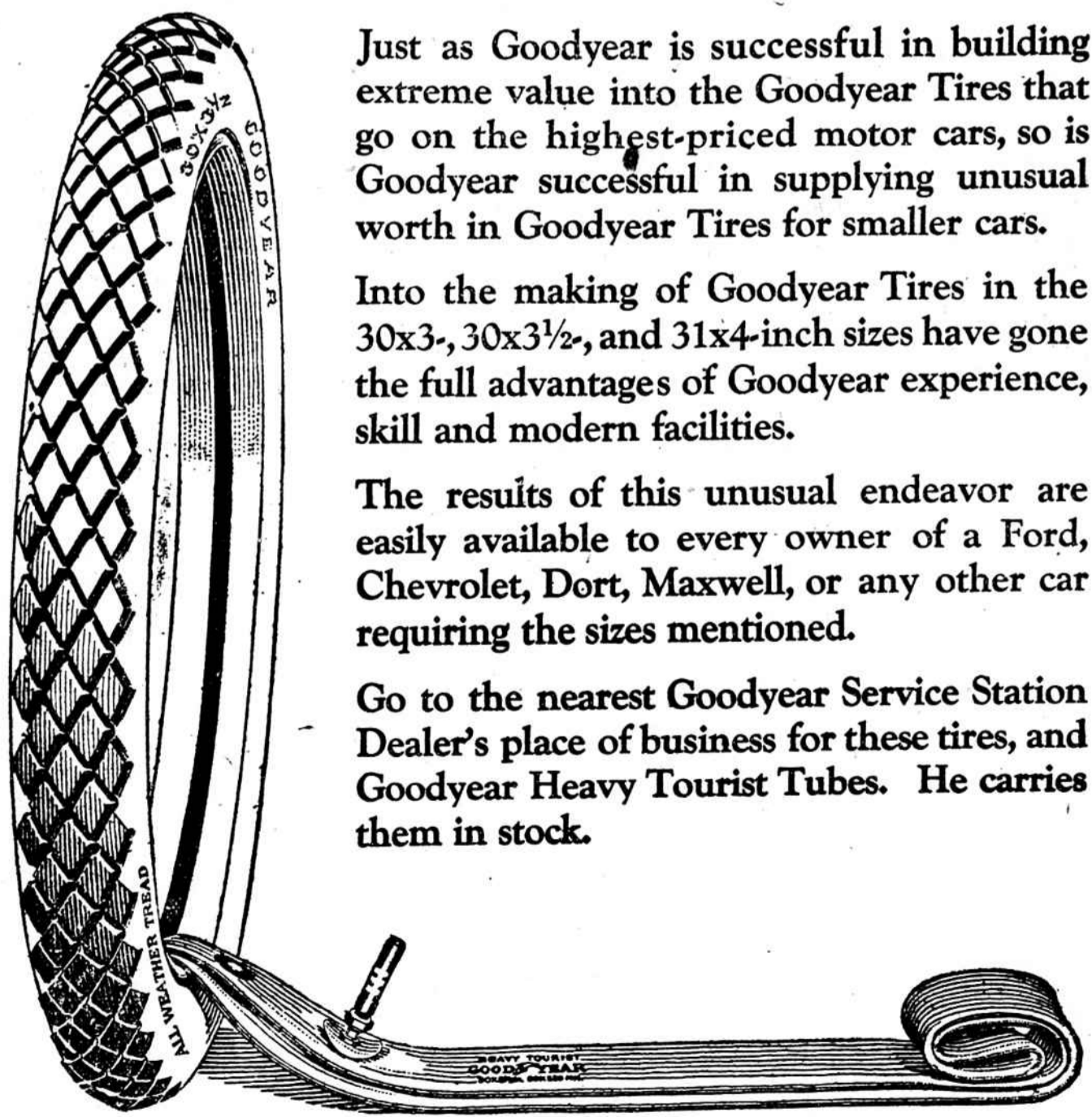
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